

American Film, December-January 1977



AMERICAN FILM

Journal of the
Film and
Television Arts

December-January 1977

\$1.75

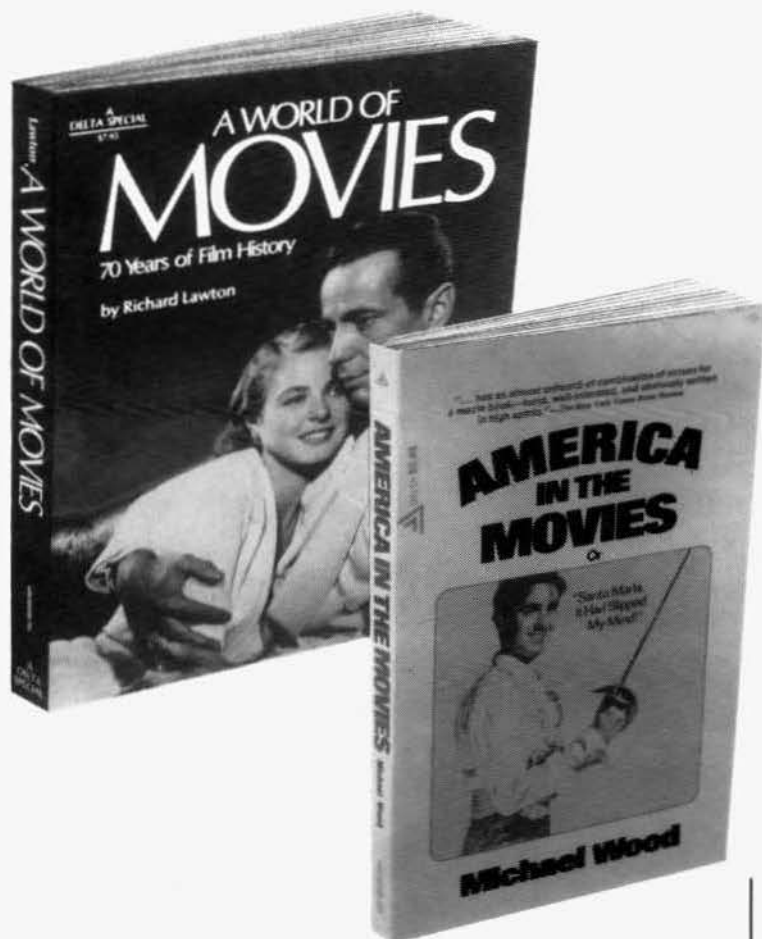


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Cover: From *King Kong*, 1976 version.
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The American Film Institute is an independent, non-profit organization serving the public interest, established in 1967 by the National Endowment for the Arts to advance the art of film and television in the United States of America. The Institute preserves films, operates an advanced conservatory for filmmakers, gives assistance to new American filmmakers through grants and internships, provides guidance to film teachers and educators, publishes film books, periodicals and reference works, supports basic research, and operates a national film repertory exhibition program.

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Letter to an Unknown Movie Critic

Dear-----:

So you want to be a movie critic. I might begin by asking you why. But, since I have been one myself, I think I understand some of the appeal of the job. Not the crass matter of seeing all those films free, and usually in comfortable screening rooms without the chatter of the couple behind you and the popcorn crunching of the couple in front of you. No, it's because you love movies and wholeheartedly admire the good ones and are filled with anger and shame over the debasement of the art by the bad ones. It's because you understand the demands and difficulties of the form, its essential nature, its checkered history, its craftsmen, and its all too few great masters.

I've read your samples, and I suppose a fledgling critic ought, first of all, to be able to take criticism. So, let me say that your reviews read, well, like reviews. I might have found them anywhere, and written by almost anyone. You tell me the names of the stars and the director. You detail the essentials of the plot, the relative abilities of the actors. You tell me also that you think the film could stand cutting by fifteen minutes (most critics say the same about almost all films) and that it compares unfavorably with a film very much like it made by a certain French director. You then add, "If you're looking to while away two hours somewhat painlessly, this film might well do, but the time might be better spent on reading the book from which it has been adapted."

Nothing much wrong about it all, and not very much right, either. But I might say this, that the "voice," the tone of the review doesn't sound like you. From our few meetings, I know there is a pleasant, modest ring to your voice, and you strike me as having a sense of humor that is somewhat self-deprecating. Why not write like the kind of person you are? Instead, you take this serious, teacher-like tone in your reviews, patronize the poor director and those actors who have not caught your fancy, and end up patronizing your reader, who you suggest ought to be spending his time in a way more intellectually stimulating. Why review movies at all, if books are your standard of what counts artistically?

I enjoy most the critics who are engaged with the medium they cover. You write me that you want to become an "important" critic, like Pauline Kael, or John Simon. The good Lord forbid, for one of each is enough. I would rather you

Comment

said, "I want to become a good writer who writes criticism." How little or how much you agree or disagree with certain critics hardly matters in the long run. Those critics who don't write well simply don't survive much beyond the dates of their publications. But a George Bernard Shaw, a Max Beerbohm, stays alive through the quality of his writing. And though James Agee is long dead, as are many of the films he wrote about, his writing on movies manages to live. All were good writers first, critics second. And that gets back to my complaints about your review samples. They don't stand out from the ruck. They lack style, and wit, and those moments of perception that make a reader realize you are no ordinary viewer, but an engaged one, who is expressing himself honestly and forcefully, and is unafraid to reveal his own personality in the doing.

Good writers are interesting writers, and interesting writers, it seems to me, are distinguished by interesting minds. Oughtn't a critic, above all, have a wide background? And, without that wide background, how is it possible to develop a sense of taste, and that particular sense that is his alone? The days are past when all a movie critic has to do is rate a film based on a one-, two-, three-, four-star system. The medium itself has grown far too sophisticated for such simpleminded treatment.

I very much doubt that it's the critic's job to advise a reader how, or whether or not, to spend his money. And I also doubt that it's his job to advise a filmmaker how to make his films better. Rather, it's to deliver himself of the host of thoughts and reactions the experience of the film has engendered in him, to sort out and structure his words into a separate form of his own. If he's interesting about it, he'll be read; and if he isn't, he'll merely be one more ordinary movie critic—of which there is already a plethora.

A few traps I've encountered in my own experience and which I would think best avoided:

Don't give the director *all* the credit. The auteur theory, so called, might hold for some cases, but certainly not all. And it's best to read and reread Sarris to make sure you know precisely his meanings when he explicated the theory.

Avoid the temptation to praise overmuch. I realize it will get your name quoted in newspaper ads, but if you are sincere about being a movie critic, you'll know this is a meretricious way of going about it, and you won't really like yourself. Nor will others like you very much, either.

The same holds true for blame. Excessive blame might get you a following among a few misanthropic souls who take a paranoid view of life, art, and commerce in general, but insult and invective are not wit, and can amount to gross misbehavior in public. Cheap shots are easy, and just that, cheap. I know you've mentioned one critic who has gained some attention through this kind of emphasis in his criticism. But if he were gone tomorrow, no one would miss him for a moment. You see, he doesn't *add* anything.

I mentioned wit more than once, but I don't mean cleverness by this, or cuteness either. Read Shaw to find out what I mean, or S. J. Perelman, or E. B. White. In fact, read *all* the good writers you can possibly absorb. They'll teach you more than an old hand like myself can.

You ask what you might expect in the way of remuneration should you devote your full time to movie criticism. Unless you're lucky enough to land a post on a large city newspaper—where you'd be protected by Newspaper Guild salary standards—don't expect to make a living at it. Contrary to the belief of my friends, who thought I had one of the world's cushiest jobs, I never did. Of course, once you've secured something of a name for yourself, you can go out on the lecture circuit. But I should warn you that if you do, you must carefully choose your lecture subjects. As with the movies, sex and violence are the most commercial.

One last bit of advice, and for this I'll quote the immortal GBS, taken from his book *Advice to a Young Critic*: "I add this crowning precept," he wrote, "the most valuable of all. *Never take anybody's advice.*"

Sincerely yours,
Hollis Alpert

Star Sampler

I enjoyed Larry Swindell's thoughtful, guided tour of the female landmarks in our movie past, "They Had More Than Faces" (*American Film*, November 1976). But I wish Mr. Swindell were less provincial when he surveys the state of things today. He broods about the absence of rising woman stars in America as if stars grew nowhere else. Or, worse, as if American audiences still looked only to Hollywood for their stars.

Is there anyone who cares about film who hasn't noticed that the interesting woman stars are now coming out of Europe—and that they are playing the meaty roles that once went to a Katharine Hepburn or Bette Davis?

A sampler, very subjective: Isabelle Adjani, the sensitive star of Truffaut's *The Story of Adèle H.*; Maria Schneider, who has managed to survive the media notoriety of *Last Tango in Paris* and give a performance, in Antonioni's *The Passenger*, of freshness and intelligence; Dominique Sanda, whose haunting presence in Bertolucci's *The Conformist* shows the remarkable work she can do with the right director; Stefania Sandrelli, the nymphet of Pietro Germi's *Divorce—Italian Style*, who grew into an appealing comic for *The Conformist* and Germi's *Alfredo, Alfredo*.

Enough. The stars, Mr. Swindell, no longer shine only over Hollywood.

A pedantic note: Mr. Swindell cites Samuel Johnson as the first to use "star" in the modern sense of a celebrity. What's his source? The *Oxford English Dictionary*, to be trusted more than Mr. Swindell in these matters, attributes the first use of that sense to the writer John Jesse in 1779. Not that Dr. Johnson had no interest in stars or was immune to their appeal. "I'll come no more behind your scenes," he told David Garrick, the actor, "for the silk stockings and white bosoms of your actresses excite my amorous propensities."

L. B. Malone
Coventry, Connecticut

Heavenly Airts

Michael Pointer's article, "Good Gods and Bad" (*American Film*, September), struck a meaningful note when he states, "But whereas movies were once produced by people who loved films and devoted their lives to making them, they are now for the most part in the hands of businessmen with very little commitment to the cinema, let alone any religious or moral considerations."

This is especially true when the classic religious films are shown on television. A case in point was the last airing of William Wyler's *Ben-Hur*. The

very beginning of the picture which depicted the birth of Christ was axed by the network.

One important area Mr. Pointer failed to explore was the music aspect of these great films dealing with the nature of God. Certainly the music added considerably to the religious impact in these films.

For example, Miklos Rozsa's academy award-winning score for *Ben-Hur* is deeply moving and emotional. And Stanley Kubrick's choice for *2001: A Space Odyssey* using *Thus Spake Zarathustra* created such a zenith that the aftereffects are still being felt in TV commercials as well as in the chic discos around the world.

Barry E. Karlin
Tenafly, New Jersey

Unprofitable Prophet

While I enjoyed Michael Pointer's "Good Gods and Bad," he missed a significant film that would have done much to amplify the impact of his thesis. The film, Darryl F. Zanuck's 1940 production *Brigham Young—Frontiersman*, showed conflict in religious films not as God versus man but as "man with God's advocates on earth," defining the nature of the "advocate" in relationship to God more than perhaps any other religious film.

According to their theology, Mormon church presidents are indeed in every way akin to the prophets of the Old Testament who, as recipients of revelation, function as the earthly liaison between God and man. In Utah, the powers of Brigham Young, successor to the founding Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, embraced political and economic dimensions as well as religious leadership.

This concept posed a unique dilemma to Zanuck and Fox scenarists Lamar Trotti and Louis Bromfield. How does a studio primarily interested in presenting a dramatic story at the same time please the Mormon Church by portraying its most illustrious leader as unflinchingly courageous and endowed with revelatory powers? Bromfield and Trotti overreacted and portrayed Brigham Young as distinctly ungodly and persistently bullheaded. The initial drafts also focused ample attention on one of the most conspicuous and exploitable Mormon practices—polygamy.

On reading preliminary scripts, Mormon leaders were, to say the least, disappointed. Following a dignified but unmistakably clear exchange of letters between the church hierarchy and the studio, Fox eventually made the traditionally portrayed polygamous Mormons into persecuted ones, and the resulting theme was one of mass intolerance by their neighbors in Illinois to the

Latter-Day Saints.

Zanuck tried to quell objections by Mormon leaders to the studio's portrayal of Young. As it is dramatically bland to depict your leading character as totally certain of his purpose and destiny in the face of adversary conditions, Zanuck presented Brigham Young as confidently aggressive, but inwardly torn by doubt as to his "call" as prophet. Vindication came, as per Hollywood's tinsel formula. In the last reel a cloud of sea gulls ultimately saved the pioneer's crops from destruction by a wave of crickets, proving once and for all as spoken by Brigham's "favorite" wife, Mary Astor, that "He was speaking to you all the time."

Apparently, the final product pleased Mormon church president Heber J. Grant sufficiently enough that he endorsed *Brigham Young* on behalf of the entire membership and thus Salt Lake City was the scene of one of the largest premieres for one film—seven Salt Lake theaters were sold out a week in advance to more than 9,000 patrons; Utah Governor Henry Blood declared August 23, 1940, as *Brigham Young Day* and a star-studded parade down Salt Lake's main street included Zanuck, Fox president Sidney Kent, and lead stars Tyrone Power, Linda Darnell, Dean Jagger, and Mary Astor.

Contemporary reviews of *Brigham Young* were nearly unanimous in their praise, comparing it to *Covered Wagon* and as socially significant as *Grapes of Wrath*, made that same year. In spite of the enthusiasm, *Brigham Young* did poorly at the box office, but even now, thirty-six years later, Zanuck in a recent letter referred to it as "my favorite film."

James V. D'Arc
Harold B. Lee Library
Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah

Deceiving Looks

The photograph of Pola Negri on page 63 in "The Continental Touch," (*American Film*, October) may be in error or at least ambiguous in that it is described as of an era "shortly after her arrival in America."

I believe that this photograph was made during the summer or autumn of 1931 when Negri had returned to the United States to make *A Woman Commands* for RKO. Pola Negri looked quite different when she first arrived in America during the early 1920s when under contract for Paramount.

Geoffrey Bell
San Francisco, California

O Ragged Time Knit Up Thy Ravell'd Sleeve

Larry McMurtry

Producers are wonderful people, particularly Dino De Laurentiis, who recently delivered himself of a judgment that had his customary, almost scriptural force behind it. "A book writer can never write a screenplay," he said, reportedly, oblivious to—if not contemptuous of—what one might think to be a massive amount of evidence to the contrary.

If this evidence were brought to De Laurentiis in the form of screenplays by book writers—the mountain to Mohammed, as it were—it would bury the Paramount lot to a depth of about forty feet; possibly it could be stacked up in a papery pyramid that would make a fitting tomb, not only for De Laurentiis but for such other little pharaohs as happen to be around at the time.

The remark was quoted by Robert Altman to Charles Higham (*New York Times*, 26 September 1976), and from the context it seems probable that De Laurentiis considers himself already in danger of such an entombment, the putative tomb being the 390-page script E. L. Doctorow contributed toward the projected (various estimates here) two-and-a-half- to ten-hour film of his acclaimed book, *Ragtime*.

De Laurentiis went on to point out that the \$7 million that will eventually be spent on the film is, after all, his \$7 million, a fact overlooked by writers, but not, in many cases, by directors. It appears that in this case Robert Altman may also have overlooked it, since it was his thought that the picture might need to have a ten-hour maxi-version, for eventual, and one would hope segmented, television release. For this and who knows what other offenses against scripture, Altman had the rug yanked out from under him. Milos Forman, newest winner in movie-land's \$100 million sweepstakes, is standing on the rug at the moment; how solidly his feet are planted no one but De Laurentiis can say.

There is one point to be made about *l'affaire Ragtime*, and that is that we live in an age of oversell. Certain writers, actors, directors, athletes, and rock stars

McMurtry on the Movies

are so ridiculously overrewarded—or let's say overpaid—as to make the word ridiculous seem altogether inadequate. Of course, any writer who has not been sensationally overpaid—myself, for example—will be thought to be merely pissing sour grapejuice in pointing this out, which in my view only makes it the more worth emphasizing. In the last few years we have seen Peter Benchley become the richest writer of all time on the basis of a trivial book; while Doctorow, whose book is not trivial but is also no sort of masterpiece, commands such sums himself as to probably be unimpressed by De Laurentiis's comment about whose \$7 million it is.

If a producer had suddenly proposed to spend \$7 million on *The Book of Daniel*, Doctorow's last book—but in my view an equally ambitious if less promotable effort than *Ragtime*—I doubt that he would have allowed himself to get quite so wrought up about the filming. Having been raised, myself, in oil-boom country, I have several times had the opportunity to witness what a calamity it can be, socially and morally, when an honest roustabout rents himself a little oil rig and actually strikes it rich. Big money has a way of convincing people that they deserve it. Maybe they do and maybe they don't, but it is nowhere evident that the pressure of millions, added to the pressure of life, has ever improved anyone's prose style. Being rich is an occupation in itself, particularly for people who arrive at it via parachute in middle life.

It is clear from the mass of interviews and journalistic trivia already piled around this project like uncollected garbage that somewhere along the way Doctorow has deluded himself into believing that the film that may eventually be made of his novel can actually be a serious work of art. To believe that is to believe in miracles. Doctorow is not your ordinary reader of movie magazines, either. He is not one of those people—if there still are any—who considers the word Hollywood synonymous with miracle. Rather, he is a seasoned editor and a gifted writer, a

man, one would think, with some skepticism. He might even be thought to have what scripture according to Hemingway would have as the first essential of a writer: a built-in shit detector.

Where is his skepticism, not to mention his nose? What clearer evidence could there be that the incandescence given off by big money far exceeds the light of reason? If Charles Higham's reporting is accurate, Doctorow now wishes he had occupied, and held, higher ground to begin with. He wishes that he—like Salinger—had held aloof and not sold the book to the movies at all. Perhaps it is unfair to attempt to deduce his reasoning from a piece in the *New York Times*, but it does appear that he feels that since the book had already made him financially secure (the child establishing a trust fund for his parent, as it were) he ought to have locked it in his house and spent the next few years protecting it from the sordid molestations of moss-ridden old moguls like De Laurentiis.

Here again, it seems, we encounter the age-old confusion between book and film. Doctorow really has nothing to worry about; his book is perfectly safe. To the extent that it is an art work, it is done and immutable, secure between its covers. De Laurentiis may end up making a sappy movie of it, but that won't cause Doctorow's lines to shriek with shame and em-



E. L. Doctorow, author of *Ragtime*, is now involved in controversy over its film adaptation.

barrassment and run off the page. The book holds a piece of ground that the movie can neither overrun nor erode: its own ground.

In my view it is preeminently silly for Doctorow to give a damn about what happens to *Ragtime* as a film. His work is done, and his tale now belongs, most properly, to its readers, not to him. The film De Laurentiis may eventually make of it is another problem, but it is clearly De Laurentiis's problem, not Doctorow's. If De Laurentiis is willing to spend \$7 million on a problem of this magnitude, I don't see that there is any need for anyone but him to lose sleep over it. He has bought it, after all, and it will assuredly bear his stamp, whoever ends up directing it. Milos Forman is a director with great gifts, but so far money is directing this picture, and money will no doubt continue to do so. Money may not be that gifted, but it's awfully consistent.

Doctorow's evident anguish at what is about to happen is an interesting indication of the ambiguities of literary success in America now. Probably no good book has been as oversold as *Ragtime*. Doctorow must recognize that he has been the beneficiary of a terrific hype; the price paid for the paperback rights to *Ragtime* is an index, not to the book's merits, but to the character of our publishing industry. Though it is really reductive to call what we have now a "publishing industry," when what it is is a media complex, in which promotability, not literary merit, is the *sine qua non*. On rare occasions—so far, only this one—promotability and literary merit may coincide, but such occasions are only flukes, and even *Ragtime* will occupy a larger chapter in the history of agency than it will in the histories of literature. It has proved to be the most promotable good book of its day.

The heart of De Laurentiis's problem is that he bought a product that had already been oversold. In order to come out on his investment he is going to have to engineer something amounting to double-sell—that is, forcing twice as many people to see *Ragtime* as really want to, and probably the only way he can accomplish that is by rounding up everyone involved: Altman, Forman, Doctorow, perhaps even Joan Tewkesbury, and burning them at the stake on camera. (The book has, after all, an elastic plot.) De Laurentiis is no doubt realist enough to know what he's up against here: Dragging Altman and Forman to the stake is going to be some chore.

The consequences, for literature and film, of this rollicking media complex of ours are sure to be many and various; some of them, like the consequences of atomic radiation, may not become evident for a few years. Obviously, this complex now has the capacity to generate

Director Robert Altman was dropped from the "Ragtime" project by producer Dino De Laurentiis.

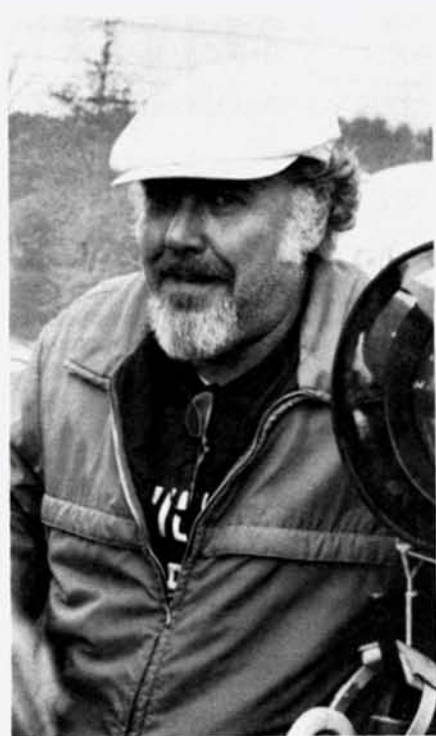
blockbusters—media megabombs—and nobody's going to put anything like arms control over on it. It will generate blockbusters as rapidly as it can.

What harm? Plenty of harm. The overselling of mediocre products debases any craft, partly because in order to oversell them it is necessary first to overrate them. Perspective—the nitrogen of art—is lost: The populace is encouraged to forget that most of what is being acclaimed as good or even great today will be totally forgotten within ten years.

Then, too, having to witness the overselling of mediocrity demoralizes the young, those would-be apprentices who must be encouraged to love craft first and money second, if craft is to survive and be passed on. This overselling either disgusts the young, or it overstimulates them, and in either case they lose and the craft loses. Consider Paul Schrader, a screenwriter of at best modest ability. Schrader has commented lately about how easy it is for him to swing deals in the \$300,000 to \$600,000 range. News like that, affably served up in the *Village Voice*, besides being in abominable taste, does an active disservice to the craft of letters—in which, if we suspend our disbelief, we might include screenwriting. Making it sound easy will send God knows how many youngsters (and oldsters) rushing to their typewriters, futilely; and, worse, it will send them rushing to their typewriters to try to become Paul Schrader.

Most of them, of course, will fail—but failing to produce something mediocre and promotable is not quite the same as failing to produce, say, *The Brothers Karamazov*. There are levels of dignity to be observed, even within failure. Failing to produce a mere blockbuster is to be doubly cheapened.

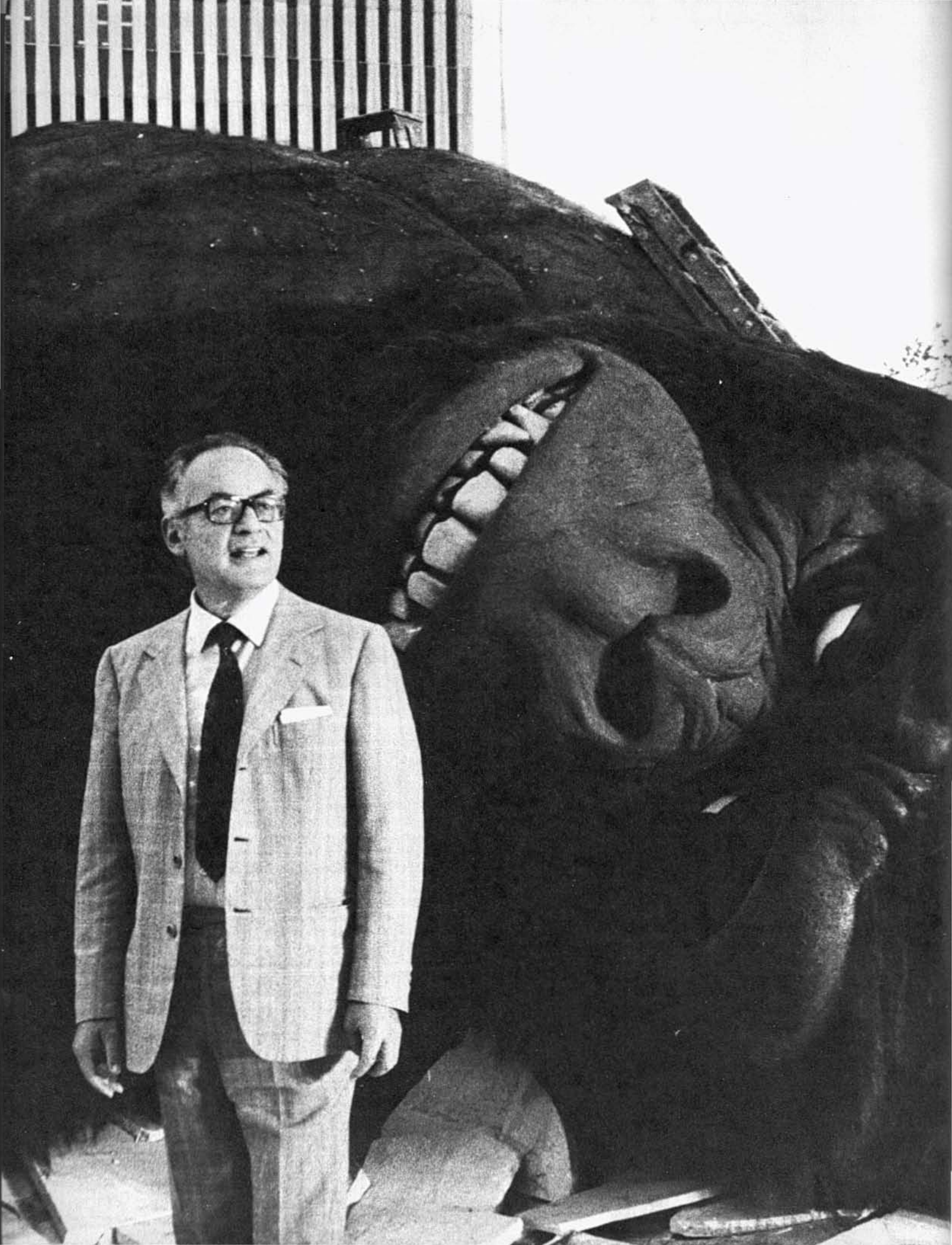
Just conceivably, the source of Doctorow's distress at the contemplation of what De Laurentiis might do with his book lies in the recognition that he was overpaid to begin with, making him thus desperately anxious to have it, at least, remain clearly Art, wherever it goes. In this case, agency got him his riches, and also his predicament. Probably he is too good a writer to think like an agent. To an agent, a book is worth what it will bring—writers operate with a somewhat subtler



sense of the value of their work. A writer with Doctorow's experience and integrity will be well read enough to be aware that he writes with great ghosts at his side. He will have read of Baudelaire's hunger, of Dostoevski's debts, of Marx's poverty, and the scramblings to which even the great Dr. Johnson was forced. Remembering all the shabby, harried masters who have preceded him, he will doubtless—now and then amid his comforts—feel an occasional twinge of conscience. He will have occasion to consider the arbitrariness with which great artists have been either starved or surfeited, and, with literary history a turmoil in his head, if some film producer should suddenly pile yet more money on him, his twinge may become a twitch.

Doctorow shouldn't worry so much. Most of the great dead wouldn't begrudge him his money, but many of them would laugh at him long and hard for harboring such unreasonable expectations of De Laurentiis, who needs a marketable product, not a work of art. He will probably have to flog dozens of scriptwriters, and perhaps even another director or two, before he gets it: Whether the result will be worth looking at, much less worth taking seriously, seems largely to be in the hands of chance. Doctorow should look sharp, and make sure he's not underneath De Laurentiis when and if that gentleman falls of his own weight. After all, it would be embarrassing if a good writer got crushed by a feather.

Larry McMurtry is contributing editor of *American Film*.





GORILLA POWER

Producer Dino De Laurentiis came to Hollywood, via Rome, filled with *brio* and a dozen projects. A year later, the flops outnumber the hits, and don't ask about Robert Altman. Now—*mamma mia!*—here comes *King Kong* to the rescue.

Bernard Drew

The road from Rome led Dino De Laurentiis first to New York a little over three years ago, where he paused long enough to make three Charles Bronson money-makers, *The Stone Killer*, *The Valachi Papers*, and *Death Wish*, plus *Serpico* and *Mandingo*, and then to Los Angeles a year ago, where he established his operations in luxurious offices on Canon Drive in Beverly Hills, and settled himself, his wife, Silvana Mangano, and their four children on a ten-acre estate known as The Knoll, for which realty man Mike Silverman asked \$3 million.

What De Laurentiis actually paid for it is not available for public record—about half would be an educated guess. But one turns north on Sunset Boulevard, past the 700- and 800-blocks, and begins to climb winding roads up to God's country, into the large estate area, where \$150,000 and \$200,000 homes look like Hooverville shacks, to finally reach the Promised Land, the electrically controlled iron gates of The Knoll, with its reminder atop the gate that only one car may pass through at a time.

It is early Saturday morning. The clouds have not yet lifted, nor has the smog disappeared, to turn Los Angeles into the sunny paradise everyone expects it to be. De Laurentiis's publicity director, Gordon Armstrong, who has never been to the house before, gets out of the car, and says, "What do I do now?" as he approaches the gate.

"I see a phone," I suggest, "and a buzzer. Just ring and state your name, age, and occupation."

He presses the buzzer, screams, "Armstrong," into the grilled apparatus above, and is greeted by a crash of silence.

"What happens now?" he asks worriedly, returning to

Producer Dino De Laurentiis at the World Trade Center in New York. King Kong has just fallen from the tall buildings.

the car, as faint, extraterrestrial squeaks begin to emanate from the grilled box. Armstrong rushes back to it, shrieking, "Armstrong! Gordon Armstrong!" and then races back to the car, starts the engine, and drives through quickly before the gates close again.

The trip from the gate to the main house seems almost as long as the road from Rome, long enough anyway to mutter the opening of *Rebecca* to oneself—"Last night, I dreamed I went to Manderley..."—or to recall the visit I had with De Laurentiis a year ago, in his offices at Canon Drive. Newly arrived in Los Angeles then, and flushed with the success of *Serpico*, *Death Wish*, and *Mandingo*, he had been ebullient and full of *brio* and hope and *gemütlichkeit*.

"I love New York," he'd said then. "It's very exciting and stimulating, but I had to move here because this is where the action is. If you make one picture a year, you can live anyplace, but if you make six to ten—" He shrugged one of his eloquent shrugs and went on to explain why he'd felt compelled to leave his native Italy.

"The political and economic situation kept getting worse and worse. By 1972 it became impossible. I was forced to come to the conclusion that if I was going to continue to make movies, I'd have to move to America. It's the only country in the world where you can work in complete freedom. Imagine trying to make *Serpico* in Italy with police cooperation. You wouldn't last one day."

He had beamed expansively and said, "I can make anything I want to, and I have many ambitious plans. Ingmar Bergman is making *Face to Face* for me, and after that we'll do 'The Threepenny Opera.' He, Fellini, Buñuel, and Kurosawa are the greatest."

"And only one American director is in that class," he'd continued. "Bob Altman. He's an absolute genius. Even Francis Ford Coppola is not in the same class, and I've tied up Altman for his next five pictures, starting with *Buffalo Bill and the Indians*, which he's shooting now in Canada. It stars Paul Newman. It should be magnificent. I've made commercial pictures and I've made artistic pictures, but you rarely can do both in the same picture. But with *Buffalo Bill*, we'll do it. We're going to spend \$6 million on it. When has Altman ever had so much to play with? And who's a bigger star than Newman? It should be a sensation."

"Then, after reading *Ragtime* in one night," he had added, "I bought it for Bob to do next, long before it was published and the reviews came out. I thought Bob was the only man to do it."

"Next, I want Roman Polanski to remake *King Kong*. You can't make bullshit these days, only quality, and our new approach to it will be *Beauty and the Beast*."

"We'll do *Lipstick*," he'd gone on. "This is a very exciting project about feminine problems, which uses rape as the springboard by which we'll go into feminine problems of today. Lamont Johnson will direct, and it will have an all-star cast, including Faye Dunaway, Ali MacGraw, and Anne Bancroft."

He had then proudly continued: "We'll do *The Shootist*,

which is about a cowboy with cancer. Don Siegel will direct, and John Wayne is the cowboy. Peter Bogdanovich will direct *King of the Gypsies* from the Peter Maas book. Charles Bronson will star in *The White Buffalo*. We'll do *Drum*, which will be a sequel to *Mandingo*, and, of course, *Three Days of the Condor*, with Robert Redford and Faye Dunaway, will be out next month. From February 1976 until Christmas, we should have ten pictures in release."

"But there is no sure way of knowing what will be commercial," he had concluded. "You have to be able to smell what an audience will want. Today, the audience is tired of television; they're going back to movies. After *Sound of Music*, we had to wait ten years for *The Godfather*, but since then, there have been ten pictures that have made more than \$30 million. There's never been a time like now. I have been making movies all of my life, and I can't remember a time when I was more encouraged."

Back to 1976. The reverie is over. We have arrived at the portico of The Knoll, and Armstrong parks the car in the porte cochère. We cross the huge courtyard past the swimming pool, pavilion, dressing rooms, and outdoor kitchen. Two Filipino maids unlock the front doors, usher us into the entry and galleria, where, if things should ever get as rough in America as they are in Italy, De Laurentiis can always remake *War and Peace*.

And we move toward the regal, circular staircase, catching glimpses of the living room, dining room, cocktail room, and library, and slowly and gracefully ascend (there is simply no other way to do it) to the second floor, with its two-bedroom suites and God knows what percentage of the house's fourteen other emergency bedrooms, and are ushered into a large, comfortable sitting room where De Laurentiis smilingly awaits.

His greeting is as warm as it was a year ago, but some of last year's ebullience is gone. Perhaps it has something to do with his last year's releases, which, to put it as charitably as possible, did not turn out as they should have.

There is something slightly measured and cautious about him now. He could be a little worried, as upward of \$23 million has been expended on *King Kong* (now awaiting release after eight months of shooting).

Also, *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* is certain to be a financial disaster. *Lipstick*, without Faye Dunaway and Ali MacGraw as promised, but with the Hemingway sisters, turned out to be one of the jokes of the year. *Drum* was released with De Laurentiis's name removed from the credits at the eleventh hour. *The Shootist*, even with favorable reviews from some critics who believe that the earth was created in three days by Don Siegel and John Wayne, can at best look forward to only limited success, because what the world needs now is hardly the sight of America's most durable cowboy plotzting away with cancer.

Only Bergman's *Face to Face* is an unequivocal success. But since the Swedish master's biggest box-office triumph, *Cries and Whispers*, took in a mere \$5 million around the entire world, at best, *Face to Face*'s profits will not be able to pay for one of *King Kong*'s toenails.

The maid brings in the espresso; De Laurentiis looks at me carefully and waits for me to begin. As I sip the coffee, I tell him that several of the New York critics used their reviews of *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* as platforms for damning De Laurentiis for taking *Ragtime* away from Altman, who had prepared a screenplay with the novel's

author, E. L. Doctorow, which was reportedly long enough for two pictures.

Though the criticism I recounted was harsh and must have hurt, De Laurentiis's face remains impassive, betraying no emotion at all. He nods slowly and says, "To make an art movie is always very complicated, because it doesn't only belong to you. It is a collaboration between the producer and director, or it should be, and when we made *Buffalo Bill*, we wanted to make an artistic and commercial success. It looks as if we failed at both."

"Altman is one of the greatest American directors," he goes on, allowing a soupçon of grimace to cross his face. "But he wouldn't listen to anybody. We are showmen in this business, we are working for an audience which is going to spend money for a beautiful evening in a theater, and if we forget we're showmen, we're dead."

"I made the deal with Altman to produce his next pictures," he says carefully, "and when Vincent Canby says I made it after *Nashville*'s release, he's wrong. I made it three months before. Bob came to me after a couple of months and said, 'I'd like to make *Buffalo Bill and the Indians*,' and I said, 'How much will it cost?' and he said, '\$6-\$7 million,' and I said, 'That's too expensive.'"

"Then I read the script," he continues, "and I said, 'I don't want to go with this script for \$6-\$7 million.' I felt it needed more story. With the exception of *Nashville*, I felt that all of his pictures needed more story, and Bob said to me, 'I agree with you. Don't worry about anything. I'll change the script.'"

"He started the picture and he had made no changes, none at all," De Laurentiis says. "He shot it as he wrote it originally. So"—he shrugs—"I lost confidence in him. I wrote to him that though I still admired him as an artist, I no longer trusted him as a man. I could not take a chance on him with the \$12 or \$15 million *Ragtime* will cost to make."

Shaking his head sadly, he says, "I never argued with Fellini on the final cuts of *La Strada* or *Nights of Cabiria*, nor with Bergman, but after the first preview of *Buffalo Bill*, I told Bob, 'You can see the audience is bored and restless. Don't you think it's too long?' Well, he didn't. 'Then why do you bother to have a preview if you're not going to watch the reactions?' I asked him."

"He tried to repeat in *Buffalo Bill* what he did in *Nashville*," De Laurentiis says, shaking his head. "But *Nashville* was a fresco about a city where everybody wanted to sing and a few people did, and *Buffalo Bill* was a confrontation between him and Sitting Bull, and what you do in one picture, you can't do in another."

What happened to *Lipstick*? I ask.

"That," he says with a faint smile, "was a little disappointing. But it's doing all right. You have to consider it a successful movie. What did it cost?" He shrugs and adds almost contemptuously, "It's a commercial movie."

For most of his career, De Laurentiis has tried to draw a careful distinction in his own mind between artistic movies and commercial movies and exploitation movies, trying to combine two out of the three, if possible, in one movie, but if not, content to settle for the rewards and punishments which grow out of each category.

He has a pragmatic view of moviemaking, the result of having spent nearly forty of his fifty-six years in the industry, working in every capacity under every conceivable

political, social, and economic climate.

He was born in a town near Naples. Still in his teens, and a traveling salesman for his father's spaghetti factory, he decided that the world of movies might offer a more agreeable life than the world of pasta, and enrolled in Rome's Film Institute.

When his enraged father cut off his allowance, he calmly supported himself by moonlighting as an actor. Once he mastered the primary rules of the game, he moved into the production end of the industry and by twenty was running the studio. A year later, he decided to produce his own films and arranged the financing for them in Northern Italy.

When the war ended, he was already drawing a neat line between his artistic pictures, his commercial pictures, and his exploitation pictures, which, at that time, were part of the emerging Italian neorealist movement beginning to attract worldwide attention.

His *Bitter Rice* was not only a success but a critical one, and its star, Silvana Mangano, became his wife.



A few years later, impresario of his own studios, Stabilimenti (popularly called "Dino Città"), De Laurentiis's production of Fellini's *La Strada* hit the international jack pot, winning many awards, including an Oscar. Yet its artistic success, though certainly welcomed, came as something of a surprise to De Laurentiis.

"It was made as a commercial picture, that's all we ever meant for it," he says with a smile. "It turned out to be a masterpiece, but that was never planned. You never know when you're going to make a classic. You don't sit down with the writer and director and say, 'Let's make a masterpiece now.' You make one and sometimes you don't know that you've made it until the audience and the critics tell you, and sometimes even they're confused."

"When we first showed *La Strada* in Venice, the reaction was only so-so," he shrugs. "But then we showed it in France, and the critical reception was ecstatic. It was the French who launched Fellini as a great artist, and from there, it spread all over the world."

But if *La Strada* was a little commercial picture which turned out to be an accidental masterpiece, De Laurentiis has always taken pains to cover himself by turning out big historical epics like King Vidor's *War and Peace*, John Huston's *The Bible*, and Sergei Bondarchuk's *Waterloo*. The epics, no matter how they ultimately turn out, are begun with the reasonable hope that the most expensive (and sometimes even the best) available talents will combine to make, if not an artistic triumph, at least a respectable try—who is going to knock Tolstoy or God?—and the thunderous pageantry will easily take care of the commercial considerations. Since so many of them have turned out to be lifeless *tableaux vivants*, De Laurentiis has had more than his share of disappointments in this genre.

The exploitation pictures, which could always be counted on to bring in the lire, and which have been, for so long, an integral part of the De Laurentiis annual agenda, have come to an end, he says. That is why he removed his name from *Drum* at the last minute. It is his final exploita-



Left, Al Pacino in Serpico, one of De Laurentiis's first—and most successful—American films.

Right, Liv Ullmann and Kari Sylwan in Ingmar Bergman's Face to Face. For a Bergman film, the returns were excellent.

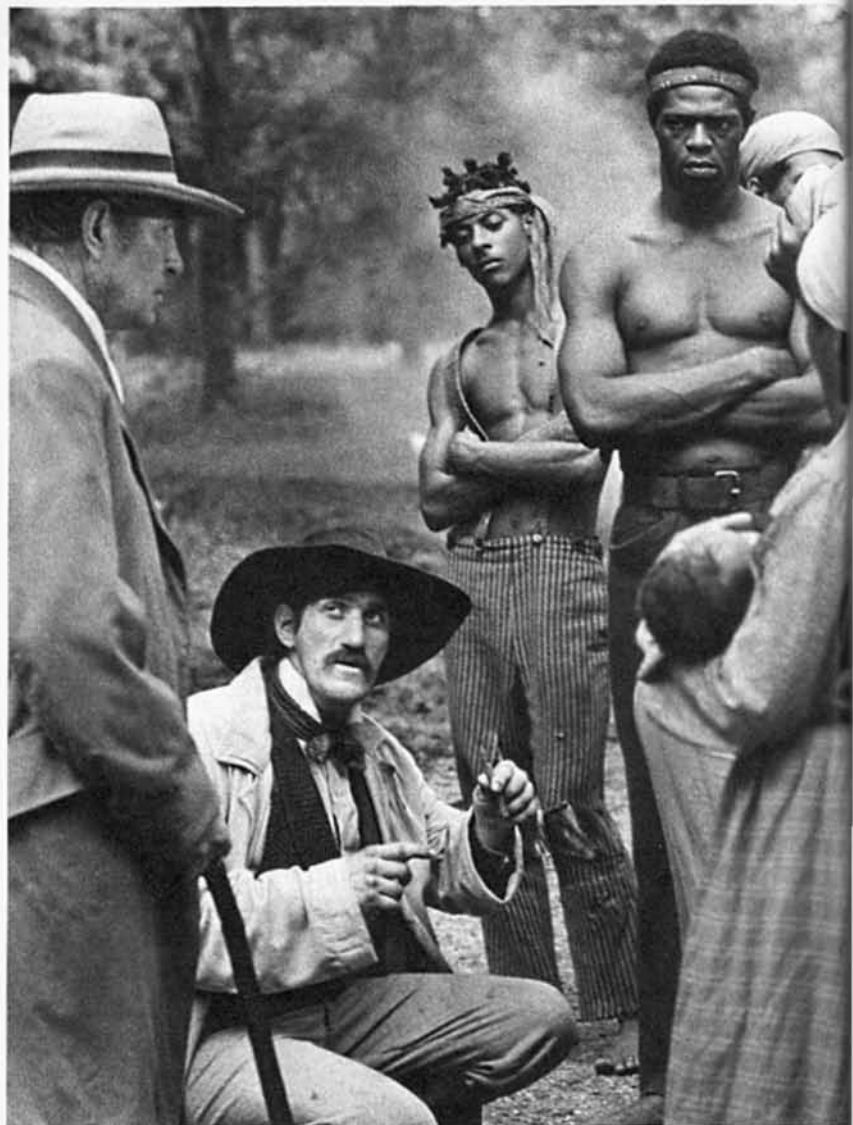


Left, Charles Bronson as an architect turned vigilante in the De Laurentiis hit, Death Wish.



The Shootist, with John Wayne, fired blanks at the box office.

Plantation owner James Mason haggles with slave trader Paul Benedict in Mandingo, an exploitation film that repulsed critics but made millions.





Yaphet Kotto and Ken Norton brawl in *Drum*, a sequel to *Mandingo*, and less successful.

Chris Sarandon and Margaux Hemingway in *Lipstick*, well-publicized but not well-attended.



tion movie, he says, and he no longer cares to be associated with the filthy breed.

"I want to make family movies again," he explains. "There has been too much sex and violence, and people are not buying it any more. *Mandingo* worked well and made a lot of money a couple of years ago, but I don't think it would go today. You have to anticipate the changes in the audience's taste and needs."

"What I mean by family movies," he says eagerly, "are spectacular fairy tales—"

Like *King Kong*?

"Like *King Kong*," he assents. "This will be simply sensational. And like *The Hurricane*, which I'll do next year."

But wouldn't one think that the Merian Cooper-Ernest Schoedsack *King Kong* of 1933 (I mean Fay Wray still lives) and the John Ford *Hurricane* of 1937 (and so do Mary Astor and Dorothy Lamour) were enough for one lifetime?

"Whose lifetime?" he parries. "Let's face it. The people who saw those pictures when they came out, if they're still alive, are old, and the old don't go to movies any more. And the young moviegoers, even if they've seen revivals of the originals, have not seen them with the new technical special effects. The old ones were spectacular for their time, but they can't compare with the new ones."

The White Buffalo, which will be released soon, is described by De Laurentiis, with a slight shrug, as "a good Charles Bronson picture," and it will be followed by *Orca*, a commercial spectacular about a killer whale which Michael Anderson is now shooting in Canada and Malta with Richard Harris and Charlotte Rampling in the cast.

Ingmar Bergman rides again for De Laurentiis with *The Serpent's Egg*, now filming in Munich, with Liv Ullmann and Peter Falk as the two lost souls adrift in Weimar Germany of 1930.

Set for some time in the future are *King of the Gypsies*, without Peter Bogdanovich, *The Great Brinks Robbery*, *The Great Train Robbery*, *Last of the Mohicans*, all on his slate for the last two years or longer, and *Raging Bull*, which the busy Martin Scorsese will direct with the even busier Robert DeNiro, and "several projects still in the discussion stage."

"As you can see, there is no set formula to the pictures," he says. "We are free and we have no firm commitment with any one company. I make single deals with each one. *Serpent's Egg* will go to United Artists, *Ragtime* to Columbia, and if I make more deals with Paramount than anyone else, it's because we have an old relationship that goes back a long time. I have no long-term deals with anybody, certainly not with stars. If you have the right story, directed by the right person, you don't need stars, and long-term deals don't work today."

He suddenly smiles and says, "I must say, despite everything, I feel good about my first year in Hollywood. I'm full of hope. The climate is just right for me, never too hot, never too cold. I don't miss Italy and I don't miss New York. Silvana misses New York terribly, though she doesn't miss Italy. But she knows that this is where the action is and this is where we have to be."

The interview is finally over, and driving downhill toward the great plains south of Sunset Boulevard, Gordon Armstrong tells me that when De Laurentiis states that

this year he has \$57 million invested in film projects, very little of it is his own money.

"Except for the development money to initiate a project which must come out of his own pocket," Armstrong states, "once he starts shooting, the big money derives from advance sales around the world."

Rushing *King Kong* into production to beat Universal's similar plan cost him \$3 million, what with the delays incurred by the company's returning from the Hawaii location and then having to sit around and wait, on salary, while adjustments were made on Kong's hydraulic arms and legs, each of which now rests on a different MGM sound stage.

There were a few minor problems when the roofs of the New York World Trade Center would not accommodate the forty-foot mechanical monster and the scenes had to be shot in Hollywood, but they were more than compensated for by the 30,000 New Yorkers who turned out to witness Kong's final moments on this earth, filmed on the sidewalk below, the tragedy duly reported in newspapers all over the world.

On Monday, I am driven to MGM, where once there were more stars than there are in the heavens, where once Greta Garbo told John Barrymore to go away, she wanted to be alone, where once Norma Shearer and Leslie Howard died for love beneath "an inconstant moon," where once Wallace Beery snarled to Jean Harlow that who did she think she was when he had found her in the men's room of the Hotel Astor. But it's now where one of Kong's hydraulic legs rests on one sound stage, where the other rests on a second, where one arm rests on a third, the other on a fourth, and a hand, which can be moved into sixteen basic positions for close-ups, rests on a fifth, and a huge snake, which is doing battle with Kong, lies now on its track in the midst of a detailed and sizable mock-up valley on a sixth, and where Jeff Bridges, playing the old Bruce Cabot role, is off by himself on a seventh. (*Grand Hotel*, where are you?)

First, I am driven through the old MGM backlot, where a 47-foot high, 170-yard long wall, made of wood, stands. This was where the heroine, Dwan—an homage to Allan?—the old Fay Wray role, now played by Jessica Lange, was sacrificed to Kong a few weeks ago.

According to the production notes, "For a month, 300 extras, playing natives on Skull Island, performed at the wall, chanting and dancing before racing up the ramps to the top of it to see Kong make off with the girl. Visitors to this set included Ingmar Bergman."

A month's further shooting still remains on *King Kong*, and I am taken to the stage, where Lange is being coaxed, in vain, to take a sixty-foot jump from the top of the stage to the inflated air mattress below.

Director John Guillermin (whatever happened to Polanski?) is doing the coaxing, but his entreaties and reassurances of safety fall on deaf ears. So a stunt woman, who rather resembles Frances Farmer, comes in, goes aloft, then stands on the grillwork sixty feet above us to deliver her line to the unseen Kong (who is presumably where the air mattress is) imprisoned in the hull of the ship.

"Hey Kong," she says, "you remember me. I'm your blind date. You haven't forgotten me?"

Suspended by a wire, she walks out on a narrow slat, leans to the left and then to the right, then teeters for a few



Kong's wake, attended by 30,000 curious New Yorkers.

moments before seating herself, cross-legged, on the slat. Air mattress below notwithstanding, I close my eyes. A nervous New York type should never be forced to observe these moments, when four months later, seated comfortably in a Manhattan screening room, the magic of movies will make everything seem effortless.

Charles Grodin, a Manhattanite once-removed, from Pittsburgh, who is playing the third costarring role of the devious oil executive who decides to capture and merchandise Kong, is seated, awaiting his turn to be called to action. He is also entertaining his daughter, visiting from New York, who is blasé about everything.

"And how is this year's Robert Armstrong?" I greet him.

"Devious and oily," he smiles. "Concentrating on my nefarious role. Of course, you must understand that nobody plays an antagonist thinking he's an antagonist. Not even if you're playing Hitler. I'm sitting here trying to justify my filthy actions."

"But I'm waiting, waiting, waiting, forever waiting to go on," he says with a grim smile. "This has turned out to be a seven-month movie, which is exactly as long as my run on Broadway in *Same Time Next Year*."

"But I think it'll all be worth it," he says hopefully. "Why is the 1933 version a classic? Not because of a girl on top of the Empire State Building, but because it's the definitive study of the rape of the environment. Kong is purity, everything else is corruption. That's why it's endured."

"And because that aspect has been enhanced in this version," he continues with a rare solemnity, "and because people are much more aware of the environment now, this could be the biggest picture of all time. It's not so bad being part of that, even after a big Broadway hit."

After his success in *The Heartbreak Kid*, Chuck Grodin

was one of the dwindling number of holdouts who insisted on remaining in New York, where the climate and rhythm of life were more conducive to writing plays and evolving television projects than the more or less eternal sunshine of Los Angeles. But he's showing signs of weakening.

"I'm renting a house in Bel Air, which I may buy," he says airily. Then catching a quizzical look from me, he adds quickly, "This-New-York-is-the-only-place-and-the-theater-is-everything attitude is snobbish and unrealistic. Years ago, actors didn't have the options they have today in movies. And don't let anyone tell you that Broadway long runs are fun. Helen Hayes once said that actors were never as good six months later as they were on opening night, so...."

Jessica Lange ambles over and sits beside us. She is a Minneapolis beauty who went to New York to study dance, then to Paris as a model, picking up a little something about mime from Etienne Ducroux, before returning to New York and the *dolce vita* existence of a successful and popular cover girl.

When the call came to test for Dwan, the 1976, rather tougher version of the Fay Wray virgin, she flew to Hollywood, tested, and won, and here she is.

"Me Dwan," she laughs. "And please write down in your pad that I've done every stunt they wanted these last seven months except those two up there."

She stares up sixty feet to where her stuntly counterpart is virtually doing somersaults on a narrow beam, and says, "Can you imagine me doing that? I'm terrified to even think about climbing the ladder for the close shots."

"Are you going to?" I ask in amazement.

"We have to," she replies.

"You too?" I demand of Grodin.

"Me too," he smiles complacently.

Director John Guillermin comes over for a brief second. Since he directed *Towering Inferno*, he's considered the *maven assoluto* on handling huge inanimate objects confronted by acts of God.

A short, pleasant Britisher, he has only time to answer my question of why he took on this assignment with "Because I like to do things that are uniquely cinema rather than something that can be done on television" before he's called back to the camera for another small emergency.

"He's really the star of this movie," Grodin remarks. "He keeps the rhythm and quality of the film in his mind constantly and holds it all together through all the delays. This monster is all over MGM and if there's a delay in one place, as he knows exactly where everything is, he goes someplace else. It seems impossible, but he'll get the picture ready for Christmas."

I saw De Laurentiis again ten days later in New York in one of the Times Square theaters where the only press screening of *Drum* was held the night before its scheduled opening.

This ploy was meant to discourage attendance by most of the critics who didn't absolutely have to review it and to permit those who did to at least have the opportunity "to see how it plays before the audience for which it was intended"—standard procedure when a major company has a certain disaster and knows it.

I arrived early and greeted Gordon Armstrong who had just flown in from Los Angeles. He was standing ner-

vously in the vestibule of the theater with a couple of United Artists people—(Paramount, for which it was made, had refused to release it when it received an "X" rating because of a particularly grisly scene. United Artists picked up *Drum*, excised the offending moment, and the movie was now a happier "R," but nothing would help it).

Except for a few rows held for the critics, the dispersal of tickets had been ceded to WWRL, a black radio station, and a half hour before De Laurentiis's arrival and the scheduled screening time, the theater was still virtually empty, people were fiftily straggling in, and Armstrong was getting nervous.

Ignoring the middle section of the theater, where a number of rows had been held for the critics, I took my seat in the last row of the side aisle, where, from time to time, I might more easily sneak a couple of puffs of a cigarette before the ushers got to me to warn that smoking was not permitted in this theater.

I took a last-row seat to observe the critics filing into their section and the almost exclusively black, older middle-class audience enter and eventually nearly fill the rest of the house.

One row, three or four in front of me and to the right, was held for De Laurentiis and his entourage. United Artists publicity executive Gabe Sumner was seated on the arm rest of the aisle seat to make certain that no peasant sneaked in.

Twenty minutes late, the lights went down and the picture came on. Shortly after it began, in the darkness, De Laurentiis entered with several men, all of whom took their seats in the row reserved for them.

There was very little reaction from the audience, at the most, a few isolated giggles. After a while, De Laurentiis lit a cigar and an usher came racing down the aisle to protest. There was a brief conclave and the cigar went out and I thought that this must be some kind of new law for De Laurentiis, having to crush out his cigar at a screening of one of his pictures from which he had removed his name.

The young man sitting in front of me, who sported an Afro, shouted obscenities at the screen at one point, when Ken Norton was being humiliated by John Colicos, representing the white race.

I wondered if De Laurentiis had heard those and a few similar remarks hurled at the screen by a few malcontents, but then he had no illusions about the picture. Hadn't he told me that *Mandingo* wouldn't work today? And then, of course, he had removed his name from *Drum*.

I ran into him in the lobby after it was over. He smilingly rushed up to me, clasped my hand warmly, and we exchanged brief amenities. There was no mention of *Drum* and his face was impassive. For some reason, I suddenly pictured De Laurentiis resting, like Fay Wray, in the huge, safe arms of the hairy ape.

He spoke briefly to the United Artists people gathered in small clusters in the outer lobby, and then he and his entourage entered the limousine which was sitting in front of the theater, which would spirit them the four blocks to Pearl's, where Silvana was waiting in his favorite restaurant in her favorite city. ■

Bernard Drew is the film critic for the Gannett newspapers.

MERIAN C. COOPER: First King of Kong

The story of the man and his work in creating the world's most famous monster.

Ron Haver

The time has finally arrived for Dino De Laurentiis and Paramount Pictures to unveil their \$24 million testament to the mythmaking power of movies—*King Kong*. An inch-thick press packet will tell you that the film has been in production eight months, moving men and equipment halfway around the world and employing thousands of extras, and that the star attraction is a forty-foot tall, six-and-a-half-ton mechanical ape costing \$1 million who can do everything except cook breakfast. The credits list almost a hundred names, from producer De Laurentiis and director John Guillermin through screenwriter Lorenzo Semple, Jr., down to the assistant auditor.

And yet without Merian C. Cooper, there wouldn't have been the eight-month shooting schedule, or the forty-foot ape, and the \$24 million could have been spent on five or maybe six other films, none of which would have had the built-in commercial appeal of *King Kong*. For it was Cooper who originally conceived, produced, co-wrote, codirected, and acted out this twentieth-century version of the myth of Beauty and the Beast and the destructive powers of both love and civilization. He did it at the midpoint in his life, a life which, up to that point, had been as romantic, extravagant, and adventuresome as the monster he devised and called "The Eighth Wonder of the World."

A flying hero in World War I, ex-

plorer, writer, innovative filmmaker, student of literature and art, military theorist, and friend of world-famous figures, Cooper's life was his own best creation, and bits and pieces of it are strewn throughout the more than twenty-five films he produced, which include influential documentaries (*Grass, Chang*), classic adventure films (*King Kong*, *Son of Kong*, *She*), and a dozen collaborations with John Ford (*The Long Voyage Home* and *The Searchers*, among others). Cooper's contribution to film history goes beyond his productions. He was among the first to see the possibilities of Technicolor, and he helped to pioneer the Cinerama process.

Cooper was no faceless studio executive or colorless technical innovator. His personality was distinct, a blend of the culture and traditions of the South, where he was born and

raised; the more aggressive and pragmatic North, where he was educated; his reading of romantic writers such as Kipling, Harte, London, and Hagard; and the works of Shakespeare and the Bible, a book he read every day. Muscular, short, with sparse, sandy hair, and an outthrust jaw, he had a blunt, forthright manner. He would size up a person through crackling brown eyes which could freeze to ice when he was displeased or angry.

His rages, when they occurred, were as towering as anything he dreamed up for *Kong*. In 1932, having purchased his first car, he was taking his fiancée, actress Dorothy Jordan, for a drive. The car stalled, and despite Cooper's efforts, would not restart. Frustrated and furious, he ordered his wife-to-be out of the car and shoved it over the cliff, watching with



Merian C. Cooper with miniatures of some of the monsters of King Kong.



From The Most Dangerous Game, with Joel McCrea and Fay Wray, produced by Cooper. The same set was used in King Kong.

great satisfaction as it bounced and ripped its way to the rocks below.

Born in Jacksonville, Florida, in October 1893, Cooper was descended from a long line of wealthy Southern plantation owners. He was inculcated from an early age with the Southern traditions of chivalry, honor, and belief in God and country. When he was six, an uncle gave him a book called *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa*, written in 1862 by Paul Du Chaillu, one of the first to explore "the Dark Continent." Young Cooper read with fascination of the tribes of giant apes that supposedly terrorized native villages; and he read with wide-eyed wonder a description of one of these apes carrying off a screaming native woman into the jungle. *King Kong* had found its seedling, and Cooper had found his first vocation: explor-

ing. To meet the challenge, he took up boxing and wrestling, and succeeded in swimming the St. John's River in Florida.

Cooper was appointed in 1911 to Annapolis, where he developed a life-long love affair, not with ships, but with planes and flying and began advocating the use of air power. He was thrown out four years later, blaming high spirits and high jinks rather than his deficiency in navigation. He soon joined the Merchant Marine, and when the Germans sank the *Lusitania*, Cooper, convinced war was imminent and wanting to get in on it, literally jumped ship in London. He injured himself, and, with no passport, he was shipped back to the United States in steerage. Odd jobs followed, including a stint as a reporter. When Woodrow Wilson called out the National Guard in

1916, Cooper enlisted, hoping that would lead eventually to action in Europe. Instead, he found himself in a unit fighting U.S. border skirmishes against raiding Mexican bandits.

Still hopeful, Cooper volunteered for flight training and became a private in the aviation section of the Signal Corps. He finally got his wings near the end of the war, was sent overseas in September 1918, and was quickly shot down after bringing down two enemy planes. He spent the final weeks of the war as a prisoner of the Germans. Cooper was soon to become a prisoner again, this time of the Bolsheviks in Russia.

He had been assigned, after the Armistice, to an American relief office in Poland, where he came into contact with refugees from the civil war raging in Russia. Seeing signs of an eventual Communist threat to the

world, he quit the army, and joined the Polish Service, then fighting against the Bolsheviks. He flew a fighter plane and resourcefully developed a method of low-level bombardment with crude bombs. But he was shot down by the Bolsheviks, and sent to a work camp deep inside Siberia. He escaped, crossing the frozen wastes in twenty-six days to Latvia, only to be imprisoned as a suspected Communist. An American relief mission found him and he returned, much decorated, to New York in 1921.

Cooper found work writing of his war-time experiences for the *New York Daily News* and then the *New York Times*. Now twenty-six, he still longed to be an explorer, and while holding down a newspaper job began studying at the American Geographical Society, where he learned map-making and survival techniques. When he saw an ad for someone with writing and navigating ability to join an expedition to uncharted regions of the South Seas, he applied, was accepted, and joined the ship, *The Wisdom II*, in Singapore. The expedition, organized by a man named Salisbury, hoped to gather material for magazine articles, films, and, possibly, a book. The cameraman who had been hired for the trip had dropped

out after a frightening typhoon, and Cooper suggested a replacement, a young combat photographer he had met in Poland. His name was Ernest B. Schoedsack. Six-foot-five, called "Shorty" by his friends (except Cooper, who called him "Monty" from his middle name, Beaumont), Schoedsack had been trained as a cameraman at Mack Sennett's Keystone studios. When war broke out he enlisted and was assigned to the newly formed photographic section of the Signal Corps.

Cooper wired Schoedsack in Paris, and he agreed to join the expedition, shooting all the footage that might later be turned into a travelogue. As it happened, the only kind of film both Schoedsack and Cooper liked was travelogues, though most of what they saw they regarded as only collections of pretty pictures. By the time the expedition was over, they had decided to strike off on their own and make a travelogue unlike anything ever seen before.

Cooper, in his studies at the American Geographical Society, had read of the nomadic Persian tribes called the Bakhtiari, who were forced to migrate over the virtually impassable mountains of central Persia in search of grass to keep their flocks of animals alive. Primitive, fierce, and sus-

picious of strangers, their customs and ways were largely unknown to the Western world. After discussing the subject, the two men decided that if it could be photographed, a film of this epic migration would be a sensation. Cooper went off to New York to raise money, and came up with \$10,000, twenty thousand feet of 35mm film, and a woman named Marguerite Harrison, who had put up part of the money on condition that she could be the third partner. Cooper had met Harrison a few years before. In one of his newspaper pieces, he had described how she had saved his life, when he was a prisoner in Russia, by smuggling him food. When the newspaper pieces appeared in book form, he got a letter from Harrison warning him that the book's distribution would endanger her life. She was engaged, she said, in undercover work for the anti-Bolshevik allies. Cooper quickly bought up all unsold copies of his book.

Schoedsack was less than enthusiastic about having a woman along on what promised to be a dangerous expedition, but faced with the actuality of the arrangement, he reluctantly agreed and the three were off to Persia. Traveling by horse and on foot, they arrived at their jumping-off place: Shustar, capital of Arabistan,



The uses of a Hollywood set: left, the back lot of RKO Pathé in 1931; the tall structure is a temple left over from King of Kings. Below, the wall and gate of the temple as used in filming King Kong.

where it had been arranged for them to meet the khans of the tribes. After explaining what they wanted, they received the hesitant permission of the khans to accompany the tribes on their impending trek. With warnings ringing in their ears about the hardships and dangers involved, they set off with one of the tribes, living their lives, eating what they ate, sleeping as they slept, and traveling the wild country. The trek lasted twenty-six days. Fifty thousand people and a half-million animals took part in this vast undertaking, fording rivers, fighting off other hostile tribes, scaling unbelievably steep, snow-covered peaks, until they at last reached the valleys of grass on the other side of the Zagros mountain ranges. Cooper and Schoedsack photographed their struggles with Schoedsack's Debie camera on its heavy tripod. In spite of the hardships and difficulties involved, Harrison was able to keep up with them.

Cooper took the completed film, called *Grass*, on the highly lucrative lecture circuit in the mid-twenties, while Schoedsack joined an expedition to the Galapagos Islands headed by William Beebe. *Grass* was a great success on the lecture trail, and it came to the attention of Jesse Lasky, head of Paramount. He immediately

offered to release it. The picture created a sensation, receiving excellent reviews and grossing several times its cost. The film, along with Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*, made four years earlier, set the style and standard for a completely new kind of film, the documentary-nature film-travelogue, which opened up untapped avenues for the motion picture to explore.

Lasky offered the men carte blanche for their next film. This time, the two focused on the jungles of Siam. In *Chang*, they told a fictitious story of one man's efforts to protect his family from the dangers and encroachment of the savage jungle. Marauding tigers and other wild animals provided the danger, but the drama was mainly offscreen in the arduous and hazardous filming. Schoedsack was attacked by a tiger. Cooper, enraged at something a native chieftain had done, slapped his face in front of the tribe. That night, at dinner, the chief's wife served Cooper a chicken stew which, unknown to him, was laced with tiny bamboo barbs. A missionary doctor saved his life.

The film opened at New York's Criterion Theater in April 1927, with a special musical score by Hugo Reisenfeld, the musical director of the

theater. The musicians included twenty men behind the screen pounding six-foot native tom-toms during the climactic elephant stampede. As an added bit of showmanship, Cooper used Paramount's new Magmascope process, which opened the screen to about twice its normal size for the stampede. The film drew glowing reviews from the critics and standing-room-only crowds. *Chang* was one of the biggest hits on Broadway that year and was awarded one of the first Academy Awards for "most artistic quality of production."

The team's next film, *The Four Feathers*, is noteworthy on several levels. It was the first Hollywood film to make extensive use of carefully matched jungle and desert exteriors, with interiors shot in a Hollywood studio. It was also the first time that Cooper and Schoedsack would come into contact with Fay Wray, who had been picked to play the female lead; David O. Selznick, who was assigned by Paramount as production supervisor; and the Hollywood studio method of moviemaking.

During the filming in Africa, Cooper became fascinated by a colony of baboons living in a dry river bed. He began studying their habits, their movements, and social patterns. Conjured up in him was the child-



The set used again for a palace gate in *She* (1935), a Cooper film.



As part of *Atlanta*, the wall (center) is burned down in *Gone With the Wind* (1939).

An original sketch for Kong by Mario Larrinaga. This controversial scene was cut for the film's 1938 reissue and not restored until 1969.

and naturalist, and was fascinated by Burden's account of the prehistoric island of Komodo in what was then the Dutch East Indies and the dragon lizards that inhabited it. One phrase in Burden's published account of his travels stuck in Cooper's memory: "I would like to bring my whole family here and be King of Komodo." Cooper liked the sound of the words and, in several conversations with Burden during the winter of 1929-1930, outlined an idea he had for a movie about a giant gorilla. Cooper thought that one of these gorillas

to have a subtle, poetic quality to Kong himself, and no real gorilla would do, nor would a man in an ape suit. Cooper also realized that the story, as it was constructed up to that point, lacked a particular scene that the audience would always remember. Then late one afternoon in February 1930 as he was leaving his office in midtown Manhattan, he heard the sound of an airplane motor. He reflexively looked up just as the sun glinted off the wings of a plane flying extremely close to the tallest building in the city, the New York Life Insurance Building. Without any conscious effort of thought, he realized that if he placed the giant gorilla on top of the tallest building in the world and had him shot down by the most modern of weapons, the armed airplane, he would have a story of the primitive doomed by modern civilization.

By now Cooper had written three treatments of the story, sketching in the characters of Carl Denham, the motion picture director who was to be a composite of himself and Douglas Burden; Ann Darrow, described as a "blue-eyed beauty with long blonde hair, soft and vulnerable, but plucky"; and young first mate Jack Driscoll, who was patterned after Schoedsack. Cooper also went over all the special effects processes then in use by the industry and concluded that, with intelligent use of the best of them, "Kong" was not only feasible but practical. He made notations on how the scenes could be achieved, which combinations of special effects work would be necessary, and how certain spectacular effects could be accomplished. He made notes on the way the film should look: "For skies and jungle on island, see Doré illus. *Paradise Lost*," giving appropriate page numbers. For scenes involving real actors and the giant ape, Cooper devised what he termed "miniature projection," that is, previously filmed action projected in miniature on the scaled sets of the jungle and the New York finale.

But he still needed a studio setup that would allow him to fully work out his ideas. All his efforts proved fruitless until, through a series of circumstances, David O. Selznick was made production head of RKO, partly by Cooper's recommendation through a friend. Selznick, not know-



hood image of the ape carrying the screaming woman into the jungle, and he began making inquiries into the existence of these giant apes, learning that the largest apes were down in West Africa. *The Four Feathers* was finished just as the sound era boomed into Hollywood, and the picture was not the success the two men hoped it would be. Cooper washed his hands of filmmaking and turned to his other main interest, airplanes. He invested heavily in the young civil aviation industry, becoming one of the founding stockholders of both Western Airlines and Pan American Airways. In his spare time, he wrote an 85,000-word treatise on baboons, but it went unpublished. A cleaning woman accidentally threw it out.

Since settling in New York, Cooper had become close friends with Douglas Burden, an explorer

could be trapped in Spanish West Africa and transported to Komodo Island. His first idea was to have one of these big gorillas fight a real twelve-foot dragon lizard and enlarge them by a variation of the Magnascope process. Over a period of some weeks, he developed a story which involved making the gorilla fifty to a hundred feet tall. Cooper came up with the name "Kong" for his giant gorilla, telling Burden that the sound of it reminded him of the sound made by a gong: deep, reverberating, dramatic, and mysterious.

Cooper, in his small New York apartment, spent the winter writing the first treatment of "Kong," but was unsatisfied. It was only after writing the "Old Arabian Proverb," which opens the story, that he knew a real (and magnified) gorilla was out of the question. He realized that he had

ing of Cooper's involvement, then invited him to become his executive assistant at the West Coast studio.

His duties involved evaluating both current and future production projects, giving his views and recommendations on the commercial prospects of each. Among the in-work projects was an oddity called "Creation" on which a half reel of tests had been shot and a script written. According to Cooper: "It wasn't worth a damn, dramatically or commercially." What was worth a damn, as far as Cooper was concerned, was Willis O'Brien, the man responsible for creating the effects in "Creation."

A man without much of a formal education, O'Brien was a brilliant cartoonist and illustrator and had evolved and perfected the technique of "stop-motion animation," wherein small, inanimate figures were made to move by photographing successive stages of their movement a frame at a time. He had used this technique in several films, most notably in the 1925 version of *The Lost World*, where his creation and manipulation of the huge prehistoric beasts created a sensation. "Creation" was to have been somewhat of a follow-up to this success; O'Brien, as he was known, had been working on the project for several years, and had surrounded himself with a talented crew of young artists, sculptors, and modelmakers. The cancellation of "Creation" came as a surprise to him and his co-workers. Cooper was very impressed with O'Brien's work and techniques. After seeing the handiwork of his co-workers, especially that of Marcel Delgado, the modelmaker, and Mario Larrinaga and Byron Crabbe, who were doing the background effects for the jungle scenes of "Creation," Cooper realized that here, ready-made, was the perfect technical crew which would enable him to do "Kong" exactly as he originally envisioned it.

His biggest problem now lay in convincing the RKO management to let him spend the kind of money necessary to do the film, which he estimated might go as high as a half-million dollars. He knew RKO would be reticent about spending that sum on something as untested as "Kong." Selznick was all for it, so Cooper, knowing that words would never convince the money-men in New York,

had O'Brien and his crew prepare four detailed sketches of some of the more spectacular scenes from his treatment.

The first sketch was the most important; it showed Kong being attacked on top of the Empire State Building by airplanes as he held a screaming woman in his paw. (Kong had been moved progressively from the top of the N.Y. Life Building to the top of the Chrysler Building, finally making his last stand from atop the newly constructed Empire State Building.) The second showed Kong



Zoe Porter, Cooper's secretary, volunteered to test Kong's full-size hand. She said it was one of her most exciting experiences.

shaking the men off a log into a jungle chasm. The third sketch had him curiously picking the clothes off the captured heroine, and the fourth showed him running amuck in New York, throwing automobiles and crushing people underfoot. Cooper also proposed that he be given enough money to prepare a test reel, consisting of several sequences from his treatment, showing the feasibility of the project.

At this point, Schoedsack and his wife returned from location on Paramount's aborted "Lives of a Bengal Lancer," and Cooper enthusiastically filled them in on the status of what they had always called "the big gorilla picture." While they were waiting for approval from New York for the tests of "Kong," the two men began production on what would be the fourth Cooper-Schoedsack pro-

duction, an adaption of Richard Connell's classic short story, "The Most Dangerous Game." Schoedsack would direct and Cooper produce, from a script by James Creelman about man hunting man on a remote island jungle. Production was about to get underway on a specially constructed jungle set, when word came through that the RKO board had authorized the spending of \$5,000 on the test reel of "Kong." Cooper's budget had called for \$10,000, but rather than argue, he put up the balance himself and work began.

He asked O'Brien and his crew to construct a model of Kong, instructing them to make him as human as possible. However, they took him too literally and the resulting eighteen-inch figure was an unrealistic hybrid of man and ape. Cooper wired the Museum of Natural History in New

York for the dimensions and skeletal structure of a full-grown male gorilla. From these details, O'Brien had Marcel Delgado construct three eighteen-inch miniature gorillas, each weighing ten pounds. They were constructed with an articulated steel skeleton, over which was fashioned latex rubber muscles, which stretched and flexed realistically. The skeleton was then stuffed with cotton which was shaped into the basic form of the animal, covered with liquid latex, giving the form shape and detail. After drying, the miniature was covered with bear fur.

For the test reel, Cooper decided to utilize an entire sequence from his treatment, opening in the jungle with the expedition in pursuit of Kong, who has captured the girl. It included a battle with a prehistoric stegosaurus, which the men kill; the lake crossing in which they are attacked by a dinosaur; Kong shaking the men off a log into the jungle ravine; and Kong's fight with the tyrannosaurus. To keep costs down, Cooper wanted to be sure that the footage would be usable in the final film; he knew that once the executives saw the ten-minute segment and the additional sketches showing the rest of the story, they would wholeheartedly approve the project.

The jungle scenes used the sets for *The Most Dangerous Game*; Schoedsack would shoot *Game* during the day, and Cooper and his crew use them at night for "Kong." Cooper had cast Robert Armstrong as Carl Denham, the intrepid moviemaker, Cooper dressing Armstrong much as he himself dressed, down to the ever-present pipe. A young Canadian actor named Bruce Cabot was assigned the role of Jack Driscoll, who falls in love with and saves the girl from Kong's clutches. Cabot had very little acting experience, but Cooper, liking his looks and his manliness, decided to take a chance on him.

While the test reel was being filmed, Cooper turned his attention to the completion of a full shooting script from his original treatment. He began working with James Creelman, who constructed a screenplay from Cooper's outline, but who quit over differences. Selznick then asked Cooper to work with Edgar Wallace, the noted English mystery writer, who had just been signed by RKO.

Wallace died just as shooting was commencing on the film; and although there was little of his work in the finished film, he received coauthor credit because Cooper realized the value of his name.

In talking over the script problem with the Schoedsacks, Cooper found that Ruth Rose, Schoedsack's wife, had a knack for storytelling. Even though she had never before written a



A miniature Kong climbs a model of the Empire State Building for the film's showdown.

script, Cooper asked her if she would go over the Creelman script and his own treatment and see what she could come up with. Since the structure was so well set, her main changes were in the dialogue, which she completely rewrote, giving Cooper the kind of simple fairy-tale approach he wanted. O'Brien and his men, meanwhile, were busily constructing the other prehistoric animals and creating the jungle. Skull Island, and Manhattan on two large tables in a closed stage. To give what Cooper and O'Brien termed "aerial perspective" to the jungle sets, they turned to Cooper's beloved Doré, copying his drawings from *Paradise Lost*. They devised a series of receding glass panes on which were painted, by Mario Larrinaga and Byron Crabbe, a tropical jungle. The use of live, three-dimensional minia-

ture foreground foliage and the glass paintings, one behind the other, gave the jungle scenes an effect of depth and mystery far beyond anything that had ever been done previously.

Cooper got the go-ahead for the project on a budget of \$500,000 but managed to get more from Selznick through squeezing budgets on other pictures. After a long search for his female lead, Cooper simply put a blond wig on Fay Wray and cast her as Ann Darrow.

It soon became evident that they would need three full-size sections of Kong for use in close-up scenes. Marcel Delgado and his brother Victor constructed a full-size bust and head of Kong with eyes that rolled, a mouth that snarled and eyebrows that moved. They also built a full-size leg and foot, together with an all-important full-size hand, which would clutch Fay Wray in close-up throughout most of the film.

The brothers tested the half-completed arm, which could be lifted by crane twenty feet off the ground, using Cooper's young secretary, Zoe Porter. She sat in the hand with no idea of what was going to happen. Suddenly the fingers closed around her, and the sound stage floor disappeared from sight. At a signal from Cooper, an operator opened the fingers, and the terrified young girl began to slip from the hand. Clutching frantically at the hand, she felt the fingers close around her and slowly lower her to the ground. It was the most exciting thing that ever happened to her in pictures, she said.

Cooper and O'Brien worked in close collaboration on the model work. Cooper dreamed up ideas and effects he wanted to get while O'Brien scrambled around town hiring engineers, mechanics, and opticians to build the devices. One of the few differences of opinion they ever had was over the character of Kong. Cooper saw him as a brute killer, a king in his own violent world. Both O'Brien and Schoedsack felt that Cooper was going overboard on Kong's violence—in his graphic destruction of the natives by stomping and chewing and in a fearful scene in the New York sequence where he plucks a woman out of a hotel room thinking it's Ann, and, realizing it isn't, flings her to the street twenty stories below. Cooper, however, kept

insisting to O'Brien that no matter what the conflict, no matter how extreme the terror, there had to be touches of humanity about Kong, and offbeat bits of humor. This was a bit difficult for the animators to accomplish, so Cooper would go down to the closed set and act out in slow motion every single motion and action of Kong for O'Brien and his crew. He insisted that they follow his example in every detail and made them redo it when he felt they had not captured the quality he wanted.

The scenes inside the theater, where Kong breaks loose from his chains, were filmed in the Shrine Auditorium in downtown Los Angeles, and the native village sequences were filmed on the back lot of the RKO Pathé studio in Culver City, where Cooper had found some standing sets left over from DeMille's 1927 *King of Kings*, including a huge structure that had been used as the Temple of Jehovah. Several hundred dollars worth of reconstruction turned it into the massive wall and gate, behind which Kong ruled his domain.

Cooper and O'Brien had one other ongoing dispute, this in relation to Kong's height. Since Kong was eighteen inches high and was supposed to be eighteen feet high, O'Brien wanted to scale down everything else proportionately. Cooper was a great believer in using sleight of hand with Kong's height; sometimes he was eighteen feet tall, in other scenes he was sixty feet tall. As Cooper said: "This broke every rule that O'Bie and his animators had ever worked with. But I felt confident that if the scenes moved with excitement and beauty, the audience would accept any height that fit into the scene. If Kong had been eighteen feet high on top of the Empire State Building, he would have been lost, like a little bug. So I continually shifted his height to fit the settings and illusions. He was different in practically every shot. After all, who knows how tall a tree is?"

In one marathon session, Cooper worked Fay Wray twenty-four hours in the scene where she watches Kong fight the tyrannosaur. It was the first rear projection scene ever done at RKO, and technical delays caused retake after retake, while the weary actress took catnaps curled up in two directors chairs. Wray had to work overtime for two other scenes as well.



Cooper, Willis O'Brien, Fay Wray, and Ernest Schoedsack pose with extras in front of Kong's wall.

Ben Johnson (left) and John Wayne in She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, one of twelve films Cooper made with John Ford.

One was the hotel room scene where Kong reaches through the window and pulls her out. For this, the full-size arm and hand were mounted on a dolly outside the window, just out of camera range. Two men pushed the dolly so that the hand went through the window toward the girl on the bed, and there were five other men at the back end of the arm, each one controlling a lever which made the fingers and thumb open and close. The scene had to be done several times to get the fingers synchronized.

Even more complex was the scene of Kong's investigation of the girl in his cave. He sits down, holding her in his hand, and begins to examine her, tickling her to make her squirm, then slowly picking her clothes off and then smelling the female scent on his fingers. Again, the full-size arm and hand were used, with invisible strings

attached to portions of Wray's costume which was held together with single threads. A movieola off to one side had the previously filmed footage of the miniature Kong actually performing the action. As Kong on the movieola made the appropriate pulling gestures, Cooper, on the stage, would yell "Now!" and an off-scene stagehand would pull the strings, pulling away another piece of clothing from the actress clutched in the full-size paw. The two pieces of film were then combined in the optical printer. (This sequence, along with the scene of the woman hurled from her hotel room, and some shots of Kong chewing natives and grinding them underfoot were removed at the time of the 1938 reissue and were not restored until 1969.)

Schoedsack had gone to New York to film background footage of the air-

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planes attacking Kong on the top of the Empire State Building. This was matched by close-up material shot in the studio of the aviators gunning down Kong. When the time came to film the close-ups of the fliers, Cooper told Schoedsack, "Let's kill the sonofabitch ourselves," so, in the final print the aviators wildly gesticulating to each other and pumping the giant ape full of lead are none other than Cooper and Schoedsack.

As the film neared completion, after nearly fifty-five weeks of work, Selznick resigned in a dispute with the New York office over the interpretation of his authority, and Cooper was made head of the studio. He immediately had to fight a major battle with the sales department over the film's title. The picture had gone into production as "The Eighth Wonder," because Cooper didn't want any other studio getting wind of what he was doing and rushing out a cheap imitation with a man in an ape suit. The title of the film had been changed to "Kong," which it carried most of the production, but the sales force kept insisting that the public would think it was about a Chinese general.

Cooper replied, in a hotly worded telegram: "If 'Kong' is properly advertised, and people see a picture of a giant gorilla dominating the Empire State Building, holding a woman in his hand, I'll be damned if they'll think he's a Chinese general." The title continued to be a bone of contention until, on one of Selznick's last days at the studio, he called Cooper into his office. Selznick told him that he had the title for his picture. Cooper looked wary. "Oh yeah?" Selznick paused. Cooper waited. "Why don't you call it...*King Kong*?" Selznick said.

The last battle to be fought was over the scoring for the film. Having looked at a rough cut of the film, several of the New York executives thought it terrible. Cooper was forbidden to spend any more of the studio's money on it, and was told to use existing music tracks if he wanted music. Cooper not only wanted music, he knew exactly what kind he wanted and where he wanted it. If the studio wouldn't give him the money, he'd pay for the costs himself. He called in Max Steiner, who was head of the music department, and showed him the film several times, explaining

just how he felt that music should be used in the film. Steiner was ready, willing, and able to do just exactly what Cooper wanted, and more. He wrote a score for an eighty-five-piece orchestra that heaves, rumbles, and shrieks its way through the film, underlining emotions, adding suspense, terror, and a kind of epic aural accompaniment. A grunt from an animal was immediately picked up with a corresponding growl from the orchestra, while Wray's screams were echoed and intensified constantly by the strings. Nobody had ever heard music like this before in a film, or so much of it. Steiner's music for *King Kong* was, and is, a landmark in film scoring.

The film was previewed in San Bernardino in late January 1933. The picture played exactly as Cooper knew it would, with one exception. As Kong shook the men off the log and they fell into the ravine below, they were set upon by huge, slimy insects and snakes and were eaten alive. The screaming on screen was matched by the screaming from the audience, a great many of whom left, and those who stayed kept up a buzz of conversation for the next few minutes, making it difficult to keep up with the continuing story. "It stopped the picture cold," said Cooper, "so the next day back at the studio, I took it out myself. O'Bie was heartbroken; he thought it was the best work he'd done, and it was, but it worked against the picture so out it came."

King Kong opened in New York City on March 2, 1933, at the vast new RKO Roxy and Radio City Music Hall theaters, which had a combined seating capacity of 10,000. Helped by a massive preopening publicity campaign, including the first use of radio spots to plug a film, the picture played to more than 50,000 people on the first day. The Hollywood premiere took place on March 23 at Grauman's Chinese Theatre where guests were confronted in the forecourt by the looming, full-size bust of Kong, peering at them from behind the vegetation surrounding the theater. For that night only, special souvenir programs had been designed and printed by RKO and given

"to Ladies Only." Printed on embossed copper pages, these programs were the work of a young graphic designer named Keye Luke, who later went on to greater notice as the actor who played Charlie Chan's number-one son.

After the success of *King Kong*, Cooper and Schoedsack made several other films including the inevitable sequel *Son of Kong*, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, and *Mighty Joe Young*. Cooper produced *Flying Down to Rio*, in which he teamed Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers for the first time. He also was among the first to see the possibilities of the new Technicolor three-component process, persuading John Hay Whitney to invest in the idea, and forming a company exclusively for the production of Technicolor films. He became one of the founders of David Selznick's new company, and convinced Selznick to use Technicolor in his *Gone With the Wind*. With John Ford, Cooper formed Argosy Productions, making such films as *The Long Voyage Home*, *Three Godfathers*, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, *Wagonmaster*, *Fort Apache*, and *The Quiet Man*.

During World War II, Cooper returned to active duty in the air force and added to his astonishing record of decorations and commendations, rising to the rank of brigadier general. In 1952, with Lowell Thomas, he co-produced and codirected *This Is Cinerama*, the first film in the new three-strip technique. And the same year he was honored by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for "his many innovations and contributions to the art of the motion picture." He died at his home in Coronado, California on April 21, 1973.

In the seventies few places in the world remain uncharted, rockets have replaced airplanes as symbols of adventure, the Trade Center is the tallest building in the world. But to anyone who loves movies, adventure, and romance, especially to anyone who has watched the giant ape pulling airplanes down from the sky, Cooper's imagination still startles and entertains audiences by turning an eighteen-inch toy gorilla into the world's most popular monster. ■

Ron Haver is the director of film programs for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

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Marcel Ophuls

The Prisoner of Documentaries

***The Memory of Justice*, his latest film, is being called a monumental work.**

***The Sorrow and the Pity* is already regarded as a classic.**

Is Marcel Ophuls satisfied to be one of the great documentary makers of our time?

No.

Antonio Chemasi

A few years ago Marcel Ophuls moved to Princeton, New Jersey, and soon the cocktail party invitations poured in, a kind of suburban homage to his fame. Ophuls was indeed a certifiable celebrity, and an eminently respectable one at that. His documentary film, *The Sorrow and the Pity*, had received extraordinary acclaim. The film dealt with the Nazi occupation of France and had created a scandal in Paris when French television, for which it was made, refused to broadcast it. The press, as it does when the occasion is very special, had called upon nonfilm authorities to write about *The Sorrow and the Pity*. Alfred Kazin, the literary critic, had said in the *Sunday Times* that he had been riveted. Stanley Hoffman, the Harvard historian, had said in *Commentary* he could have watched for several more hours.

Ophuls's respectability had a pedigree. He was the son of Max Ophuls, the celebrated German director who made *The Earrings of Madame de* and *Lola Montès*. He had worked for years in French and German television turning out documentaries on serious subjects.



Ophuls's next film, *A Sense of Loss*, was about Northern Ireland and received decent reviews, but Alfred Kazin was not called upon to write about it. It was not *The Sorrow and the Pity*. In Princeton, where Ophuls had turned from a celebrity into a person again, the cocktail party invitations ceased.

This fall, Ophuls's new film, *The Memory of Justice*, opened in New York, and the critics were virtually unanimous in their praise. Even Pauline Kael, who didn't like it, confessed she felt guilty that she didn't. The film is about the Nuremberg Trials and the fitness of the judging nations, and the film's implications are even larger than *The Sorrow and the Pity*'s. Ophuls's name is again in the press; celebrity has returned. In Princeton, the cocktail party invitations have started up. This time Ophuls is saying no and trying very hard to avoid rude language.

Not that rude language is likely to change matters. Respectability seems to dog at his heels; prestige and seriousness hound him. He says, with feeling, "I'm pissed off at my level of respectability." It's something of an embarrassment, like na-



Photo by Maureen Lambray

tional honors falling upon a fierce radical in middle age. Especially for Marcel Ophuls, who was raised within show business, who has always been leery of the stifling effects of respectability, who has spent a lifetime stubbornly cultivating a streak for the unconventional and the original.

For example. When Ophuls came to Princeton, he came at the invitation of Princeton University. The eminent maker of documentary films was to be a Visiting Fellow for two semesters, teaching film. There were, at the university, certain tacit expectations: Ophuls, a serious man, would surely include in his courses the revered names of European cinema, the names that would give the courses the appropriate academic luster. Imagine the astonishment—even mystification—when Ophuls taught two semesters of American comedies and musicals. (He called one semester, “White Telephones and Dark Forbodings.”) There were Capra, Cukor, Lubitsch, and Sturges. There were Keaton, W. C. Fields, Jerry Lewis, and Woody Allen. But there was no Eisenstein, academically respectable, but, alas, no maker of comedies.

Then there was the CBS affair. *The Memory of Justice* was embroiled in a long and bitter dispute between Ophuls and his European producers. In the meantime, to make ends meet, he joined CBS News as a staff producer of documentaries. CBS hoped to put Ophuls to work on projects that were suitably serious for someone of his reputation. Everyone was taken aback—even dismayed—when Ophuls proposed his first project, “Fred Astaire and the Protestant Work Ethic.” Too “frivolous,” it was decided; everyone was at pains to point out that the project would only “trivialize” his extraordinary talents. CBS News instead suggested a nice, solid documentary on the McCarthy Era, and the old Edward R. Murrow films were pulled out as inspiration. Ophuls demurred. He suspected CBS had a “self-congratulatory” project in mind; besides, *The Sorrow and the Pity* had covered some of the same themes. Ten months later and not one project CBS and Ophuls could agree on, the two parted company, amicably.

There’s even, this year, the Woody Allen affair. Allen is at work on a new comedy, which means that no one from God to insurance salesmen is safe from his wit. Ophuls received a call from Allen’s office asking for permission to use an excerpt from *The Sorrow and the Pity*. That should have been enough to send a chill through a properly respectable documentary maker. Ophuls merely inquired if Woody Allen had seen the film. He expected to be poked fun at, but he didn’t want to be poked fun at for the wrong reasons. Woody Allen wrote to say he had seen it and, in fact, thought it was a masterpiece. Ophuls, a great admirer of Woody Allen films, will be excerpted in the new comedy.

There are earlier examples. There is the young-Ophuls-at-the-Sorbonne affair. He was a philosophy major and proposed his doctoral thesis on the mutual influence of philosophy and fashion—for example, the connection between wigs and the views of Voltaire or between the formal gardens at Versailles and the rise of the Rationalists. (It’s a topic now in fashion—see Roland Barthes.) Ophuls’s professors weren’t impressed, and they suggested something more academically worthwhile—a nice comparison between William James and Henri Bergson. Ophuls dropped out.

But perhaps the best example of Ophuls’s challenge to his public respectability is this statement: “I made a movie about the German occupation of France because I was asked to, because I had no other job at the time. I didn’t have much choice. If somebody had told me that I could make a movie with Fred Astaire instead, there’s no doubt about what I would have chosen.”



Two scenes from Ophuls's latest film, The Memory of Justice: his wife, Regine, once a member of the Nazi Youth in Germany; Telford Taylor, American prosecutor at the Nuremberg Trials for Nazi war criminals.



The drive to Princeton, New Jersey, from Washington is under a brilliant autumn sky, the kind that brings unexpected summer pangs. Before the passing farm fields and grazing cows turn into industrial blight farther north, I escape the New Jersey Turnpike and soon enter Princeton. It's a place that might forever serve as Hollywood's idea of a college town. Even the shopkeepers are professorially rumped. On a side street that speaks of family-rearing and white-collar jobs, I find the Ophuls house, a smallish colonial comfortably settled behind trees and bushes. At the door is Ophuls's wife, Regine, a handsome woman with the eager friendliness of the European host. Marcel, she says, is in the garden in back. She calls out through the kitchen door, and when I see the back yard—sunlit, unkempt, as if Auguste Renoir were the grounds keeper—I'm suddenly drawn to it like a child. At the far end I come upon Marcel Ophuls as he steps out from behind a clump of small trees. He is holding a bunch of salad leaves in his hand.

Ophuls's forceful, vaguely accented voice, present in each of his films, is unmistakable; so is the witty, ironic tone—on the screen so savagely effective, but here, amid sunlight and greenery, thankfully deactivated. He is wearing a tired corduroy jacket and a turtleneck, and he suggests, especially with his strong, tense face, a French intellectual slumming in an American garden. The garden is a modest affair—a few tomato plants, a couple of rows of salad, some leek, which has unexpectedly

thrived. With a gardener's fatalism, Ophuls points to the damage caused by slugs. A short distance away is the children's ragtag garden—there are three daughters—consisting entirely of flowers.

We settle in chairs in the sun; sitting some distance away in the shade, knitting, is Ophuls's oldest daughter, Catherine, who is twenty. But the yard is too appealing for immediate talk of Nuremberg or the Nazi occupation, and so, by agreement, we instead discuss our common affection for Venice until lunch.

Inside, after a meal that included salad from the Ophuls garden, the dining room table is cleared, except for the wine. Catherine has moved her knitting operation to the couch and is monitoring our talk. She has recently arrived from Europe where she was studying. With her round face and wide smile, she has an appealing resemblance to her grandfather, Max Ophuls. It's a resemblance that Ophuls must fondly contemplate, for his talk is never far from mention of his father, and his voice will drop to softness.

"I don't know of any other influence on my life that comes anywhere near the preponderance of his influence on me," he says. "A 'talking head' film has very little to do with *Madame de*, obviously—and perhaps unfortunately." He laughs, yet the voice is a bit rueful. But on the relationship toward the audience, he says, "on whether you are entitled to use the film medium as primarily a means of self-expression or primarily a means of communica-



tions—all these things are things where my father had not only an influence but a monopolistic influence on me.”

Ophüls recalls the hard years the family faced after emigrating to Hollywood in 1941. The family—Ophüls was the only child—had been twice exiles. Like many other prominent Jews, they had left Germany for Paris in the thirties, and when the Nazis occupied France they were obliged, after a period in hiding, to leave Paris, too. In Hollywood, friends and relatives gave them food and money, but it was four years before Max Ophüls directed a feature. Ophüls still has a letter his father sent him in 1946—he was in the army—confessing that his staunch anti-Hollywood attitude had been due to sour grapes, to being on the outside looking in. “As soon as he was on the inside looking in,” Ophüls says, “he was as happy as could be.”

But the American films of Max Ophüls were not commercial successes. “That isn’t because he considered himself to be an outsider,” Ophüls says. “He was never a snob, and he detested the very concept of the avant-garde in show business. He was a sophisticated man, and sophistication is usually something that doesn’t play in Peoria.”

Ophüls finds a German book on his father and turns to a crowded photograph taken on the set of *Lola Montès*. I have no trouble picking out Max Ophüls with his broad, serenely confident smile, an old Boston politician unexpectedly fallen among movie folk. I search the other faces for the young Ophüls, then in his twenties and his father’s assistant, while the present Ophüls, in his late forties and balding, hushes Regine, who is about to help me. All the faces are directed toward the camera, but I come upon one whose eyes are fixed not on the camera but on Max Ophüls himself. The look on the face is of absorbed admiration. It is Marcel Ophüls.

Ophüls places the book on a shelf. There are several Hollywood books nearby, but I notice no history books—those apparently stay in the study. These days, Ophüls says, he is making his way through G. M. Trevelyan’s *History of England*—he’s up to the Stuarts—and confesses an abiding love for Queen Elizabeth I, “my ideal as the perfect politician.” His reading can go in other directions—James Thurber, P. G. Wodehouse, Balzac, his “all-time favorite.” When he’s not reading, Ophüls’s inclinations are all-American—he plumps in front of the TV set, tries Scrabble (but in what language?—the entire family is trilingual—German, French, English), and plays tennis with friends like the international law authority Richard Falk, who is one of the “talking heads” in *The Memory of Justice*.

It’s this personal element—the inclusion of friends, family, himself—that gives the documentaries of Ophüls their uniqueness, their intimacy, even when the topic is global, and their frequent poignancy. At one point in *The Memory of Justice*, Regine, his German-born wife, tells his Princeton students, gathered in what looks like an editing

room, that she was a member of the Nazi Youth. It’s a personal, even awkward moment, but it reflects the film’s complex point of view—its appreciation of the difficulty of placing blame and its abhorrence of generalities. The autobiographical element also reflects an aesthetic of the documentary. “I don’t want to pretend that I’m objective when I’m not,” he says, especially when “these are subject matters on which none of us can be objective.”

That’s a reprimand for the documentary makers who claim consistent objectivity—the “holier-than-thou” crowd, Ophüls calls them. Nor has he much patience with the “live-in” filmmakers, who unobtrusively wait outside the bathroom door, say, for a scene between husband and wife that will signal imminent divorce. “I think that’s rather indecent,” Ophüls says. “I’d rather get Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn to do that for me.”

Ophüls’s own method is deceptively simple: the formal interview. His subjects are forewarned, are dressed in their best clothes, and are seated in their most secure chairs. In *The Memory of Justice*, Albert Speer, the confidant of Hitler, sits with the self-composure of a Kenneth Clark, elegantly guiding us through the Nazi horrors. He might have spent twenty years not at Spandau but at Oxford. Lord Shawcross, the British prosecutor at Nuremberg, is comfortably sunk in a leather chair. The peaceful English countryside is framed in the window. He talks coolly of civilian deaths from Allied bombings as if he were discussing a bad year for a burgundy. Yet like those Richard Avedon photographs in which the subject is asked to pose as he wishes, the formal interview reveals by the very choice of public mask.

But Ophüls has other reasons. “It’s a more sporting proposition if you give your quarry a chance, at least some sort of handicap,” he says. “They’re so much at your mercy already through the natural process of crosscutting, putting into a certain context, contradiction by somebody else, and most of them know that. At least they should have the privilege of being able to assess, on the basis of the conversation and the basis of the questions that are asked, what they are getting themselves into. Then if they trap themselves that’s something else.”

If that suggests a motif of the hunter and the hunted, Ophüls would not deny it. He is not detached in his films: He has a viewpoint. He is an obsessed pursuer of truths, and brings “passion”—a favorite word—to his filmmaking. *The Memory of Justice*, he says, is “about the difficulty of judgment, in some cases the impossibility of judgment, but it is also a film about the necessity of judgment. When someone says you should refrain from judging people who have had an experience entirely different from your own, especially if that experi-

ence is more difficult than yours, that is not the same as telling you that you should switch off politics, or refrain from making a judgment."

He adds, "Nothing is more political than the attitude that you don't want to be political. This is a supremely political act, too."

The Sorrow and the Pity, Ophuls observes, tries to show that separating politics from the rest of our lives is "totally unrealistic." The film crosscuts from those who resisted to those who collaborated with the Nazi occupiers—and to those who do not recall seeing Nazis at all. "When the crunch comes," Ophuls warns, "if you have trained yourself to be that way, your behavior is then likely to be shabby and to be something which in a later stage of your life you have to be ashamed of."

Ophuls brings the point closer to home. "A good argument can be made for the theory that the callousness of a certain part of American reaction to My Lai is morally more reprehensible than the behavior of Germans in the Third Reich." Why? "Because Americans had access to information and were living in a country where you didn't get deported to a concentration camp if you said something which Nixon or Johnson didn't like. To some extent—I know this will probably shock a lot of people—even the French had an easier time of it than the Germans did, in some respects. If you were taking an anti-German attitude in France you were, after all, taking an attitude against the invaders, and you could count on a great deal of sympathy among your neighbors on that basis alone."

At the core of his films, Ophuls declares, is the connection between individual experience and collective experience. His films, he says, "strive to show, whenever possible, all the individual behaviors; all the subtleties and all the shadings, all the complexities of individual behavior within a collective context. In that way, I suppose, my work can

be seen as antigeneralist." Marxist critics and others, Ophuls says, are forever complaining about his films: "Yes, but what about the working class? Yes, but why don't you have more women in your films?"

"The answer," Ophuls says, "is that I don't make films about classes, and I don't make films about quotas. I make films about individuals." Perhaps Albert Speer, for one, instinctively understood that. In *The Memory of Justice*, Speer comments on those in the Third Reich who claimed ignorance, "One could have understood if one had wanted to." He pauses, and makes the correction, "Or rather, I could have understood if I had wanted to."

Ophuls stresses the individual, cutting across political and national lines, but he acknowledges that he can be misunderstood. "Certainly one of my intentions is to promote greater understanding for others, including their weaknesses. But it has never been my intention to promote fatalism, or to promote the historical view that human nature is what it is and cannot be changed."

What Ophuls does promote, and about this he can become animated, is the need to accept responsibility for one's actions. Modern life, he observes, makes us all more dependent upon one another than life did in the past; the burden of individual responsibility is also greater than in the past—and so is the temptation to escape the burden, to blame our circumstances, to blame our past or society. Enter the social sciences, and they, "being the whores that they are, give you exactly what you want to hear," he says. "My films are very much made against the idea that you should listen to that particular siren song that puts you to sleep." Lina Wertmüller's *Seven Beauties*, for example, he regards as part of that siren song, and he cites Bruno Bettelheim's recent powerful attack on the film. Bettelheim, the eminent psychologist and survivor of a concentration camp, argues that *Seven Beauties* puts survival above everything, at any price, even the loss of one's humanity. Ophuls, paraphrasing Albert Camus, states, "The world is absurd, but we must live our lives as if it weren't." He adds, "I think that anyone who understands the content of *The Memory of Justice* the way I wish, the way I hope, it would be understood, will understand that it is an anti-*Seven Beauties* film."

If there seem to be more villains than heroes in Ophuls's films it is because, he says, "heroism is always exceptional and unusual." *The Sorrow and the Pity*, for example, "was considered politically scandalous in France because people took it as a denunciation of the French. I've always thought of it as a celebration of heroism. It doesn't seem to me to be such a revolutionary point to make or such a terribly scandalous thing to say that resistance is a rare phenomenon."

And who are the villains? "The villains in my films are really the 'alibiers,' the people who are opportunistic not only in their behavior in times of crisis but who are also opportunistic in the way that

Marshal Henri Pétain in Ophuls's *The Sorrow and the Pity*, a film about the Nazi occupation of France. Pétain's Vichy government collaborated with the Nazis.



they think about themselves afterwards—who use selective memory, who lie to the camera.”

The noise of children playing comes in through the open front door. The afternoon light is waning. We have been talking with the steady clatter of a typewriter in another room. Regine is practicing her typing; she is trying, Ophuls says, to get a job at Princeton. Documentaries have exacted a heavy price from Ophuls, for they have involved him in protracted fights with producers, and money has become a problem. *The Memory of Justice*, found “boring” and too long by its European producers, was finally taken away from Ophuls to be recut. But the original print was surreptitiously brought to this country last year, and shown to critics who rallied to Ophuls’s support. A settlement was finally reached, and Ophuls’s own version has been released by Paramount. It was a fight of principle; Ophuls was trying to maintain the integrity of his work. *The Sorrow and the Pity* had its own problems when French television, one of the producers, decided not to show it, and so began another struggle. These experiences have left the son of Max Ophuls bitter and wondering why the albatross of documentaries has been hung around his neck.

“If I never hear the words Nazi, or anti-Semitism, or anything like that as long as I live, I’d be a happy man,” he says. The words are spoken in a voice close to a whisper, and he means them.

Ophuls fell into film work in the fifties, without his father’s encouragement, after leaving the Sorbonne. He worked as an assistant on a number of films, did television work, was often out of work, and made his first feature film, *Banana Peel*, starring Jeanne Moreau and Jean-Paul Belmondo, in 1963 with the encouragement of his friend François Truffaut. *Banana Peel*, a comedy about con artists, was well received, but his next film flopped. Ophuls turned to television again, working on a French “Sixty Minutes,” and gaining experience as a documentary maker. *Munich*, a three-and-half-hour documentary, came out of his television work, in 1966, and so did *The Sorrow and the Pity*, in 1971. When French television refused to air it, the film opened in a Paris theater, and soon brought Ophuls international attention. But all these years, Ophuls’s one hope has been to return to feature films—to comedies, to musicals. Instead, as he says, “I have become a prisoner of documentaries, and to some extent a prisoner of their themes.”

Catherine has abandoned her knitting on the couch—a couch, Ophuls says, that has come from the Salvation Army. The living room is sparsely furnished, though comfortable, and there is a look of unsettledness, as if Princeton were a temporary stop, which in fact it is. If film opportunities arise in Europe, the family will move, though Ophuls feels obliged to stay through the school term for the younger girls’ sake. Ophuls, like most fathers, has begun to worry about college costs. The middle daughter, Dani, is seventeen; the youngest, Jeanne, is twelve.



Jeanne Moreau, Gert Frobe, and Jean-Paul Belmondo in Banana Peel, Ophuls's 1963 comedy about con artists. His friend François Truffaut advised him; Moreau put up "seed money."

Jeanne, who has returned from school, joins us at the table to announce a poor grade in her French test. The rest of the family is amused since she has lived most of her life in France, and Ophuls tells her to remind her teacher of that. Her face an oval in a mass of blond hair, she is drinking from a glass with a straw; when she hits bottom she makes delicious slurping sounds, waiting for a reaction. In a moment, she's ordered out of the room. Dani bursts into the house to say that she's considering a full-time babysitting job. “For a full-time baby?” Ophuls asks. She is tall and slender with a quiet air. Both the younger girls seem too absorbed with being young to worry overmuch about the battles their father has been waging. Yet they themselves—in fact, the entire family—seem veterans of living with the man who chooses to fight them. They accept with silence his small explosions of temper—because of loud talk in the kitchen or a door left open. But no one ceases to reapproach Ophuls soon after, as Regine constantly does, sometimes running her hand over his head, with the tolerant look of someone who knows a softer side.

Ophuls acknowledges his “oppositional” character. He wonders if native unpleasantness isn’t a factor in his fights for the integrity of his films, and he recalls that the Resistance heroes themselves were often odd characters who fell into heroism. Even his identification as an intellectual has its worrisome aspects.

“I suppose,” he says, “I am an intellectual of sorts, because otherwise I wouldn’t have the historical background or historical interest to make these films. At the same time I deplore it. I deplore it because I think there’s a danger of lifelessness, of lack of vitality.”

And there’s the nettlesome problem of respectability—“one of the things that makes me very unhappy about the turn that my career has taken.”



The personal toll of the Northern Ireland conflict is captured in Ophuls's study, *A Sense of Loss*.

He says, "Respectability is death in the arts. No person who is actively engaged, whose lifeblood is involved, in creating something, ever has the urge to define what he is doing in terms of respectability—not if he's any good."

"Whatever prestige I have acquired," Ophuls adds, "is a kind of coffee-table prestige. When I get a visiting fellowship to Princeton, it's on the basis of making four and a half hours of heavy fare for the happy few, which gives a high level of respectability."

True, there are worse fates, but the discomfort Ophuls feels has simple origins: His heart belongs to show business—he is very much the son of Max Ophuls—and those raised in the traditions of show business, he states, are "unhappy and uncomfortable" with respectability and intellectualism. "Show business," he explains, "strives for universality at the very core of its reason for being. A spectacle is something which has a universal quality in it, or, if it doesn't have it, it is in some way crippled." Universality, of course, isn't to be confused with an appeal to the lowest common denominator.

"That's the difference between mediocrity and Lubitsch. You just don't confuse the two." One seeks originality and wit, the other seeks success by repeating last year's hit. He quotes, to make his case, from the sayings of Max Ophuls: "If you spend your life running after the crowd, all you see is their ass."

Ophuls takes a proprietary interest in show business and worries about the kind of persons it attracts—often the "dropouts" from serious discipline, who forget that show business has its own discipline. He complains of filmmakers whose "lack of competence in communication is transformed into a quality. Obscurantism, lack of articulateness becomes a quality."

That may partly explain why Ophuls's infre-

quent moviegoing these days is mostly limited to the masters and old favorites—he has seen *North by Northwest* twelve times. Another reason is "self-preservation," an attempt to avoid a challenge to one's own views of moviemaking. "My old man used to say, 'Why should I go see movies? If the movie is bad, I'm bored, and if it's good, I'm jealous.'" There's a final and, for Ophuls, a sadder reason. He sees too many films—comedies, musicals—that he believes he himself could have done better if his career had gone in the direction he wanted all along.

It is mid-evening, and the playing outside has stopped. Dani appears with a meticulously drawn facade of a Renaissance building, a homework assignment. Ophuls examines it with a series of oohs and aahs and gives his approval. Regine announces dinner in ten minutes, and Ophuls and I take a walk for a few blocks in the cool air. We pass safe, comfortable looking houses with TV sets shining like gray beacons through large picture windows. We seem worlds away from Nazis, Nuremberg, My Lai. Ophuls, ambling along, reaching at leaves on darkened branches, speaking in a low voice, suddenly seems a faintly lonely figure, as if having integrity these days were an isolating experience.

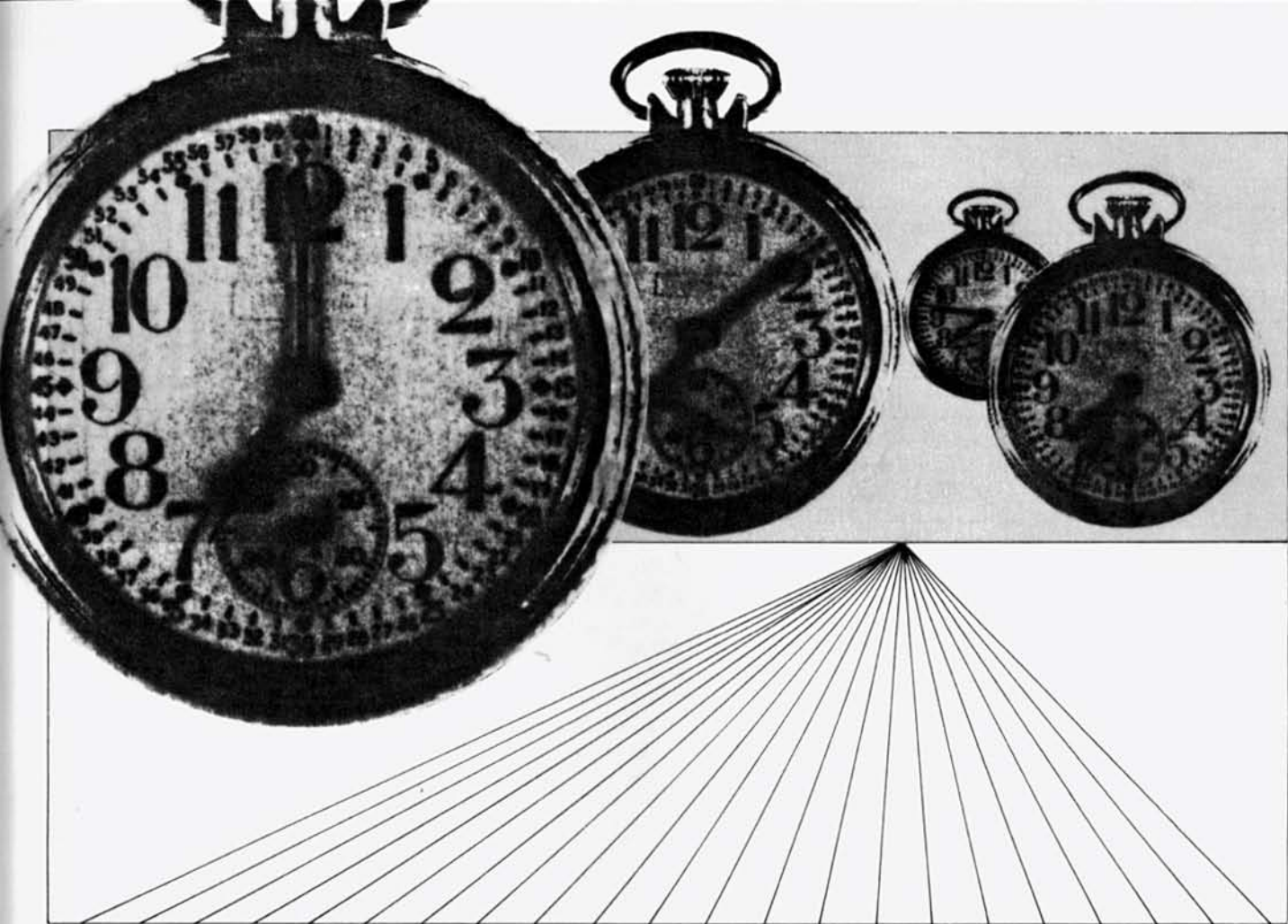
Earlier, as we talked at the dining room table, his voice ranging from whispers to shouts that would bring Regine to the door, Ophuls tried to express what his struggle has been like. "That documentaries can possibly be any fun to make," he said, "is because of what reality brings to you—the surprise it brings to you. So you have to keep your door open."

Then he raised his voice. "You cannot, cannot, cannot put up with hierarchical structures—even the kindest, nicest, most understanding hierarchical structures—who are constantly asking you, implicitly or explicitly, 'Marcel, what are you going to do? What is it going to be? What is it going to look like?'"

"If you prescript a documentary, you cut the life out of it by definition," he said, and he offered an example. "I'm not going to talk about the emphasis of Speer in *The Memory of Justice* before I have done Speer, and when I have done Speer it is too late." Ophuls went on, "It's one thing to do the research, it's one thing to know who you are going to interview, to know why you are going to interview." The voice now had what Ophuls would call passion. "But it's another thing to have to agree by committee in advance what your emphasis is going to be, what your priorities are going to be, what your connections are going to be, what is going to crosscut with what. And I simply will not do it!"

"I think," Ophuls said evenly, "I've come to the end of the road, because I think I am too expensive and too difficult a customer now to be viable in that particular area for anybody with sense. So, goodbye." To documentaries; not, of course, to films. ■

Antonio Chemasi is senior editor of *American Film*.



Inside "Sixty Minutes"

The show is not only popular—many say it's television's finest hour. What happens the rest of the week before each Sunday rolls around?

Stephen Zito

It is the start of a new season and nobody knows where to sit. Dan Rather stands in a corner learning his lines. Mike Wallace looks skeptically at the three padded yellow chairs placed neatly before a black flat and then calls for his special cushion. Morley Safer, who loves to eat, contemplates a dry sandwich from the CBS cafeteria with disgust.

The first taping session of the year is running late. The frenetic, suddenly humorless director, Arthur Bloom, has lost patience with his phlegmatic correspondents. "Mike, would you and your assistants sit down," Bloom testily orders as he leaves the sound stage for the control booth. The men take their places, softly joking among themselves. The voice of Bloom loudly calls for quiet over the PA system. Wallace looks at a camera and for the ninth season tapes his lead-in for "Sixty Minutes."

"I'm Mike Wallace," he says authoritatively, and the others follow.

"I'm Dan Rather."

"I'm Morley Safer. These stories and more tonight on 'Sixty Minutes.' "

Things soon go sour. The order in which the

numerous lead-ins appear on the Teleprompter is wrong, and Bloom comes quickly out of the booth trailing clouds of chaos. Don Hewitt, the volatile, excitable executive producer, screams unintelligible instructions over the PA. Bloom says, "Shut up, Don," to no one in particular, and a mischievous Wallace says into his open mike, "Don, Artie asked that you shut up."

Hewitt, sounding like Captain Queeg on the bridge of the *Titanic*, stamps his feet in rage until told sharply to stop by his assistant, Merri Lieberthal. The motionless faces of the correspondents appear in triplicate on the bank of wall monitors. Hewitt suddenly stabs the PA button and yells at Dan Rather, "Dan, did you move?"

"No, but sometimes I breathe," Rather edgily replies.

The tension on the stage is deflated by obscenity and humor. For a "goodnight" tag in which Rather and Wallace are supposed to look amused, Safer stands behind a camera and imitates a chimp; when Hewitt becomes overbearing, Wallace ad-libs, "This is Mike Wallace. Don Hewitt is on vacation this week, and everything is quiet."

Hewitt raves on, and Safer comments that he thinks Hewitt is going crazy. Wallace reminds his producer that there is a reporter on the stage taking notes. It makes no difference.

The tension eventually affects the correspondents. During one taping, after Rather says, "I'm Dan Rather" in his modified Texas drawl, Mike Wallace, who has forgotten his lines, looks at Rather with feigned wonderment and says softly, "No shit." The crew laughs politely, but Hewitt's outrage knows no limit. Wallace cracks up and ruins the next take as well. An hour later, when taping is wrapped up, Rather asks of no one in particular, "Am I still Dan Rather?" Morley Safer walks over to the reporter and remarks, "After this, you're entitled to not say anything good about the show."

The most popular information show on television "Sixty Minutes" is and the winner of twelve Emmys, three Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University awards, one Peabody Award, a George Polk Memorial Award, and assorted citations from the American Medical Association, the American Bar Association, and The Christophers.

The premiere program that Arthur Bloom assembled for the ninth season of "Sixty Minutes" is typical of the range and quality that make the show a success. The lead story on that broadcast, "Give Us Your Debt Collectors," was an exposé of the methods used by certain debt collection agencies in Minneapolis. "We'll show you documented abuses practiced by unethical debt collectors," Wallace promises in his lead-in to this tightly edited piece of investigative reporting. The style is pure Wallace: compassion for the victims of cruel and unusual

debt collection practices; outraged accusation for those who had violated legal and ethical standards.

On the same show, Rather presented a sympathetic portrait of maverick union leader Ed Sadlowski, a thirty-seven-year-old, hard-line populist who is challenging Lloyd McBride, I. W. Abel's handpicked successor for the presidency of the United Steelworkers Union. Sadlowski believes in confrontation with "the Bosses" rather than cooperation. Morley Safer's segment dealt with the Sulair Corporation, a manufacturer of air compressors, where in an effort to "humanize the workplace" there are no foremen and no time clocks, but rather generous profit sharing and fringe benefits which include tennis courts and a swimming pool.

This provocative, entertaining mix of minidocumentaries on contemporary life and social issues has earned "Sixty Minutes" more than twenty-three million viewers and a "thirty-three share" of the early Sunday evening audience. The show has more viewers than "The Evening News With Walter Cronkite," and it stays abreast of its main competition, "The Wonderful World of Disney." It has an adult audience. Recent CBS demographics indicate that, of the 23,120,000 viewers, all but 1,730,000 are adults. It is also a prosperous audience. The mean family income of 6,170,000 of the viewing households is more than \$15,000 per year, and a high percentage of those viewing have at least one year of college education. The show has become a solid success.

"Sixty Minutes" was not always so successful. The first three years of its existence (the premiere show was on September 24, 1968) the program alternated with "CBS Reports" in the "CBS News Hour" at 10 P.M. on Tuesday. The competition every week was "Marcus Welby," then one of the highest-rated shows on television, and once a month, "Sixty Minutes" was up against "First Tuesday," the NBC documentary magazine show. It was a case of destructive counterprogramming. The "CBS News Hour" ratings were low, and by 1970 "Sixty Minutes" had a Nielsen rating of eleven and a low twenty share of the total viewing audience at that hour. At the end of its third season, "Sixty Minutes" was dropped out of prime time and given a start time of 6 P.M. on Sunday afternoon where it was often preempted by empty stomachs and NFL football. Yet the show drew acceptable ratings, and in December of 1975 (after maintaining excellent ratings as a prime-time summer *rerun*), "Sixty Minutes" was moved up an hour into prime time to replace "Three for the Road," an ailing CBS entertainment program. It now looks like "Sixty Minutes" is there to stay.

The "Sixty Minutes" offices, referred to by one producer as "Kafka Alley," open out from a grid of blind hallways in the CBS News headquarters in midtown Manhattan. The offices of the senior producers are on the side of a square and those of the three coeditors are on the other. The offices of these veteran newsmen are crammed with wall-

sized maps, books, and prestigious awards gathering dust on crowded shelves. It seems more like a university than a television show; the conversation is literate and intelligent, the relationships friendly. Everyone agrees it is the best job in television.

The "Sixty Minutes" staff numbers almost sixty. There are fifteen full-time producers, three researchers, fifteen film editors, numerous secretaries and administrative assistants. The *Wall Street Journal* estimates that the budget for the program is \$5 million per year which averages out to about \$100,000 per show. It is one of the most expensive news operations in television, but the average cost per show is still half of what it costs to produce an hour of prime-time police drama.

The men who oversee this staff are Don Hewitt, the executive producer, and Palmer Williams, the senior producer. Hewitt is emotional and quick-tempered, and gives off ideas and suggestions like a pinwheel gives off sparks. Williams is his opposite—organized, calm, and rational. They are one of the most successful teams in broadcasting.

Palmer Williams is a veteran of documentary. He served his apprenticeship with the Frank Capra "Why We Fight" unit during the Second World War and later worked for eight years as production manager of the legendary "See It Now" with Edward R. Murrow. After its cancellation, he became the director of operations for "CBS Reports," where he also produced individual documentaries. He has been with "Sixty Minutes" since the beginning.

Sixty years old with gray hair and a lined face, Williams smokes too much, and sometimes coughs when he should be laughing. He constantly keeps an eye out for story ideas and draws inspiration from a variety of sources—CBS producers and correspondents, newspaper clippings, and people at the regional news bureaus and affiliates. Williams's desk is piled high with mail. He reads most of it himself and estimates that perhaps twenty-five percent of the segments that reach the air have their origin in viewer suggestions. "The reason I look through all these letters is to see what things are on the mind of the public," Williams says. "In this show we are trying to deal with changes in American life: We are holding up a mirror to what is going on in the country.

"Somebody writes in and tells you about something, and you look into it and find it's all there—the story of a single guy who stands for a whole group of people. There was a piece that Morley did on a man who was working for an oil company and was forced into early retirement: He was fifty-eight and had been let go. He couldn't get another job, and if he'd been allowed to retire at sixty, he would have had a higher pension. A lot of people see themselves in that, an awful lot of people. Suddenly you are looking at the whole problem."

The "Sixty Minutes" producers work far in advance and there are always a number of stories held in reserve, in the "bank," so that when Don Hewitt assembles the show every week there will be a proper balance between the three segments. Only



The men of "Sixty Minutes": Morley Safer, Dan Rather, Mike Wallace, and executive producer Don Hewitt.

rarely are all three pieces on the same subject, although there were complete shows on cancer, heroin, and Vietnam. Hewitt makes up the show each week in much the same way a magazine editor assembles an individual issue of a magazine, giving thought to length, tone, and contrast. "The function of the story bank, of having features on the shelf, is balance," Williams explains. "One of the great strengths of this show is variety. Many people stay with you because this piece is a meaty piece and this is a piece which is fun, one is serious and another comic."

Each individual "Sixty Minutes" show has, in addition to the three feature segments, two additional "departments"—Letters and Point-Counterpoint—that are used to achieve some sort of editorial neutrality. When Williams reads the mail, he keeps an eye out for typical and outrageous letters that can be aired on the Letters segment. Williams is not afraid to air unfavorable letters and irate viewers are given a chance to sound off. A typical letter will read, "CBS is catering to hippies, barflies, scum, and the United States Supreme Court." Any segment that deals with political subject matter will generate a lot of mail. A recent Dan Rather interview with former Watergate special prosecutor Leon Jaworski prompted a number of letters, and Williams aired a few of the more unfriendly. Says Williams, "You may get 150 letters on the Jaworski piece that are 'Right on' and 'Yeah, boy' and 50 letters that say, 'You dirty sons of bitches, why don't you stop flogging a dead horse,' but it's more fun to put on your critics than your backers."

Another device used by the "Sixty Minutes" producers in quest of editorial fairness is Point-

Counterpoint, the long-running, acerbic debate between smooth-talking conservative columnist James J. Kilpatrick and shrill liberal spokesman Shana Alexander. These minidebates, often preempted by football overruns, range from defense spending to presidential debates and are assigned by the "Sixty Minutes" staff. Each speaker has ninety seconds to challenge or respond to the other, and alternates weeks of having the final word.

The segment is not without its problems. Kilpatrick has always represented the conservative side fairly, but there has been some difficulty in filling the slot of the liberal spokesman. Before Shana Alexander joined the show in 1974, this role was taken by Nicholas von Hoffman, the controversial *Washington Post* columnist. Says Williams, "One of the problems has always been that, while Kilpatrick speaks—and speaks well—for the conservative side, there were a lot of liberals who said, 'Well, von Hoffman is not speaking for me, he is not making my case,' and you still get a number of people who say the same thing about Shana."

During Watergate, von Hoffman compared the beleaguered president with a dead mouse on the kitchen floor that nobody knew what to do with. The analogy caused a stir; apologies were offered but von Hoffman's contract was not renewed at the end of the year. "I think one of von Hoffman's problems was the tendency to ham—reaching for the calculated sneer or the outrageous *bon mot* that would set people on their ear," says Williams. "We used to tell Nick, 'there's nothing editorially wrong with what you've done, but on that tube you're coming through too strong; be a little cooler, a little more statesmanlike.'"

"Sixty Minutes" is a producer's show. There are five producers assigned to each of the three coeditors. Each of these producers will spend between five and seven weeks doing research and preliminary filming on a story before the correspondents are brought in for the final week of shooting and scripting and editing. It is an economical way to work and allows a correspondent to cover a number of stories in a given year. Each correspondent has his specialty: Wallace is the caustic interviewer and pocket muckraker; Rather is best on domestic politics and investigative journalism; Safer is the essayist who covers domestic and world affairs in a highly personal style.

The senior "Sixty Minutes" correspondent is Mike Wallace, who has been with the show since the first broadcast, when he shared the job with Harry Reasoner. Wallace came to the show with years of experience as a CBS News reporter and anchorman. He had been assigned a tour of Vietnam in 1967 and covered the Nixon presidential campaign from New Hampshire to Miami in 1968. Morley Safer calls Wallace "the best interviewer in television," and producer Don Hewitt adds, "Mike has a sixth sense for the question that will evoke a man or woman's character." Over the years he has

conducted hard-hitting interviews with, as we are reminded by a glowing CBS press release, "Lt. Colonel Anthony Herbert, Saigon's PX king William Crum, ITT lobbyist Dita Beard, John Ehrlichman, the Shah of Iran, Alexander Haig, Donald Segretti, Charles Colson, Egil Krogh, H. R. Haldeman, Eldridge Cleaver, former Secret Service agent Clint Hill, Ronald and Nancy Reagan, and CIA director George Bush."

Wallace is known for his willingness and ability to speak with anybody about anything, no matter how unpleasant or painful. He comes to an interview well prepared, asks tough questions, and, if he senses equivocation or untruth, goes for the jugular. He has the reputation of being tactless and sometimes nasty. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, former White House aide Charles Colson claims that "a post-Watergate interview with Mr. Wallace was so probing that it persuaded him to plead guilty to an offense related to the break-in of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office."

Some of these qualities are absent from the Mike Wallace who now presides as the senior correspondent on "Sixty Minutes." He is gracious and friendly with the staff and with outsiders. About the offscreen Wallace, Dan Rather remarks, "Mike's image is as the Original Tough Guy, but in personal terms he's a laugh—he's sensitive to other people and a good friend."

The first years Wallace worked on "Sixty Minutes" there were only twenty shows per year and the pace was slower. Wallace, who is fifty-eight, now feels the strain of being on the air every week of the year. "I have waves of being tired," Wallace says while rubbing at eyes reddened by the hot lights of that afternoon's taping session. "It's been eight years of jet lag...strange hotel beds...a variety of waters and diets...the pressure of coming back and forth. There was a time I enjoyed immensely taking a bag and walking down an airport ramp, but after the first five years it got a little old. About a year ago, I wanted to quit, except where do you go? There isn't a job in television as good."

Wallace, who credits Hewitt with the concept of "Sixty Minutes," claims that it took the producer several years to persuade the CBS program people to give the show a chance. The format of the show was patterned after similar shows that had appeared on British and Canadian television and on the homegrown Public Broadcasting Laboratory. Harry Reasoner was originally to have been the solo anchorman on the show, and Wallace believes that he was chosen to add some "bite and counterpoint" to the low-keyed, genial Reasoner style. "Those were heady days," Wallace recalls. "Suddenly you had enough time and money to prepare, and enough time on the air to do the kind of show you wanted."

Wallace and Hewitt were not always in agree-

ment about the nature of the show. "We found our format by trial and error," Wallace remembers. "The early battles were fought in an effort to find out what it was we really wanted to do, but over time we developed a kind of balance. I was always after the hard story, the gritty story, the pointed story, because those are the ones I do best. Palmer Williams and I sometimes ganged up on Don Hewitt to drive those notions through; Don wanted essays and features and humor.

"This is not to say that Don, who understands hard news, is not after that, but he wanted to get people to watch and he felt that we could get people to watch by entertaining as well as informing. He will take what is effectively a 'hard' piece of news and give it a gloss and polish, a style."

One of the most "entertaining" Wallace segments from the early years of "Sixty Minutes" was his interview with Nixon during the 1968 presidential campaign. Wallace's questions were tough and probing; at one point he reminded Nixon, "The name Nixon is anathema to millions of American voters; to them Richard Nixon is a political opportunist to whom the desired political end has justified just about any political means." Nixon felt the interview had gone well, but the edge to Wallace's questions raised some doubt about the reporter's objectivity. Wallace defends the questions. "With a hard question," he states, "you are simply restating as proxy for your audience what journalists and millions of Americans had been saying about Nixon for decades—that he was a political opportunist, a loser, a man devoid of magnetic appeal. I try always to be fair, but I don't fall into the trap of 'on the one hand, on the other hand.' It's the function of a reporter to ask tough questions of a man running for public office."

Shortly after Nixon became president, Spiro Agnew attacked the press in his famous speech in Des Moines, Iowa, that launched the Nixon campaign to silence the media. But Wallace claims that "Sixty Minutes" did not buckle under to the administration, and the record bears Wallace out. There were a number of shows over the next few years critical of defense spending, military preparedness, the conduct and the human cost of the war in Vietnam, and Watergate. Wallace's only concession about the charges of anti-administration bias is that "in the fact of treating certain stories and by the manner in which they are treated, a point of view can sometimes be perceived."

One of the strongest of Wallace's Vietnam shows detailed the work of the Fitzsimmons Hospital orthopedic ward where Vietnam wounded without arms and legs are taught to walk again, or taught how to live with paralysis and pain. Wallace recalls the piece proudly. "I suppose in our guts the producer and I were trying to say something about the war," Wallace explains, "but the war was an inescapable issue then and some of our attention went to that; the same was true of race or the Nixon White House.

"We are looking for good stories that reflect con-

troversy and drama and conflict within our society, but we don't sit down in a doctrinaire way and say, 'Boy, this is an issue and I have a point of view I'm going to put across.' We analyze, we illuminate, we report, but we do not editorialize. I don't think you have to say 'I believe.' If you lay out your facts in front of the American people—and if you are fair in your treatment of those facts—then people can make up their own minds."

Yet, letting people make up their own minds is not always as easy as it sounds, and Wallace has come under recent criticism for the objectivity of his reporting. The story in question, "Israel's Toughest Enemy," showed that Syrian Jews are now able to live without harassment in Syria, Israel's avowed enemy, and to attend synagogue, school, and work with impunity. The segment caused outrage within the Jewish community in the United States and charges of bias were leveled at "Sixty Minutes." A formal complaint was lodged by the American Jewish Congress, and CBS was taken before the News Council, an informal industry board that hears complaints about bias in reporting (in a moment of levity, Don Hewitt calls it a "kangaroo court"). The charges of bias were found to be without merit.

Wallace has no reservations or regrets about doing the show on Syria. "We were taking on a powerful lobby," Wallace says, "and they did not like me making a simple declarative statement—that things are better for Syrian Jews than they were a year before. I wasn't saying anything pro-Syrian or anti-Israeli. I wasn't taking an editorial point of view, but I was reporting facts in a way that was faithful to conditions within Syria. We went back a year later and found that things were even better."

Sometimes the methods of "simply reporting" that Wallace employs have engendered controversy as well. During a segment about the possible dangers of nuclear power, called "How Safe is Safe?" Wallace interviewed William Anders, the one-time astronaut who was then chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and asked pointedly, "Have you ever heard of a fellow by the name of Bob Pollard, Mr. Anders?" Anders said that he hadn't. Then Wallace told him that Pollard had just resigned from Anders's commission *because* he believed that safety standards were not being properly enforced at Indian Point Number Three, a nuclear power plant near Manhattan. This was the first that Anders knew of the resignation or the accusation (both of which had occurred only that morning), and his confusion and fumbling were recorded for the world to see by a "Sixty Minutes" camera crew.

John J. O'Connor, the TV critic of the *New York Times*, expressed strong criticism of the ethics and methodology of "How Safe is Safe?" "Now this is rather sensational stuff, with the antinuclear power bias of the piece made almost blatantly apparent.

The result may raise unfortunate but legitimate questions about the journalism of 'Sixty Minutes.' It is an inescapable fact that while Anders was being confronted, Pollard was being attractively displayed, faced with no tough questioning." Charles F. Luce, the chairman of Con Edison, condemned "How Safe is Safe?" as a "case of managed news...intended to frighten the public and build television audience out of that fright."

The O'Connor criticism annoys Wallace who feels that he was using legitimate journalistic means to get at the truth and to provide provocative drama. "I think O'Connor's criticism is totally without merit," Wallace states. "After all, what is the editorial function? You are after candor and spontaneous reaction; you are not after public relations manipulation. I don't think the *New York Times* would stay in business very long if Sy Hersch did his reporting the way O'Connor suggests."

"I'll grant you that there's a special impact to television; there is more drama in it when you are suddenly faced with a real-life, real-time situation; I'll grant you there's more drama in it when you have a camera playing on the face of the commission chairman as you confront him with the resignation of one of his safety officers who was convinced that safety regulations were being improperly imposed."

John O'Connor also criticized a Dan Rather piece, "The Hired Gun," that focused on John Dane, a mercenary who admitted to acts of terrorism and murder. Dane told Rather that he had recorded a conversation with Irv Rubin, who runs the Jewish Defense League in Los Angeles, during which Rubin offered him \$250,000 to kill Yasir Arafat, the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization. During the filming of a subsequent interview

Mike Wallace, "the best interviewer on television," and Morley Safer, "a stylist with a wry perception."



with Rubin, Rather asked him if he had offered Dane money to kill Arafat; Rubin denied the accusation, then Rather played the incriminating recording. Rubin's face was framed in close-up as he was forced to concede that he did make the offer.

"The Hired Gun" caused a debate in print between two critics of the *Times*. After John O'Connor wrote an article in which he criticized Rather for "unfair entrapment," John Leonard stepped forward to defend the show: "Breaking a story is often a business just as unlovely as solving a criminal case....Of the many techniques of journalism, the nasty surprise is one of the most honorable. Without a gun, without a subpoena, a reporter better damned well have a nasty surprise up his sleeve."

Dan Rather has had several nasty surprises up his sleeve since he joined the show in October 1975 to assume some of the workload from Safer and Wallace. One of Rather's early pieces was an exposé of Allied Chemical Corporation, a company that was dumping noxious Kepone wastes into the James River in Virginia. The piece had national repercussions. His report on the financial dealings of Democratic representative Robert L. Sikes contributed to Sikes's censure by the House Ethics Committee on charges of conflict of interest.

Rather has a long history with CBS News. He was White House correspondent from February 1964 to September 1974 during which time the tension between Rather and the Nixon White House staff grew steadily worse because Rather was a tough and persistent questioner of the president. Rather's public differences of opinion with the Nixon administration made him, according to some CBS insiders, a liability on the hard news beat, and, after Watergate, Rather was assigned to "CBS Reports" for a year before moving to "Sixty Minutes."

The American people have not forgotten that Dan Rather was once the nemesis of Richard Nixon. After Rather's recent "Sixty Minutes" profile of Leon Jaworski which focused on presidential guilt and the Ford pardon, one viewer wrote, "It was a pathetic performance and made Mr. Nixon look good and you cheap." Another viewer, in reference to the Borg-Connors tennis match at Forest Hills that preempted all of "Sixty Minutes" except the Jaworski segment, wrote, "Apparently you got CBS to preempt your program with a tennis game so that all the time left could be used to discredit the Republican party."

Rather claims that the publication of Jaworski's *The Right and the Power* dictated when the piece would run and that the book's contents dictated what would be in the show, but his reasons were also personal—friendship and a sense of history. "When I was a green reporter in the fifties, I had known Jaworski rather well," Rather recalls. "But when he was special prosecutor, I didn't see him very often. What interested me as a journalist was how very little of Jaworski the person came out at the time he was special prosecutor, so one of the things I wanted to do when I came to 'Sixty Min-

Dialogue on Film



Chartoff-Winkler

An inquiry into the arts and crafts of filmmaking through interview seminars between Fellows and prominent filmmakers held at Greystone, under the auspices of The American Film Institute's Center for Advanced Film Studies. This educational series is directed by James Powers.

The old Hollywood producers—the Irving Thalbergs, Harry Cohns, Louis B. Mayers—were colorful, extravagant, and irreplaceable. Some had unlikely backgrounds, a shaky command of the language, but an unerring sense of public taste. The old days are gone. Extravagant style, Bismarck control, legendary waste and achievement—these have given way to a new style.

In today's Hollywood, the old studio producers—some not so legendary nor so irreplaceable—have been replaced by a new, quieter breed, the independent producers. They work for themselves not for the studios. They develop projects, they make deals, they put packages together—complete with screenplay, stars, and directors—and then look to studios for funding. Ruritanian extravagance has been replaced by bottom-line efficiency. Colorful personal style has been replaced, more often than not, by a comfortable, businesslike manner. It's not the stuff of legends, but in Hollywood today legends are in short supply. It's a very sober industry.

Robert Chartoff and Irwin Winkler—or just Chartoff-Winkler—not only personify the new breed, but are among the most successful of the new breed. They're young—they were born in the early thirties when the old producers were already breathing

fire; they're college-educated—Chartoff with a degree from Columbia University Law School, Winkler from New York University; they're family men who worry about the little time they get to spend with their wives and children.

So much for the differences. Producers, even in the staid Hollywood of the seventies, are still producers. A gambling instinct is essential, seat-of-the-pants intuition is the only sure guide, a personal involvement the only way to run things.

Take *Rocky*. An unknown actor with the unlikely name of Sylvester Stallone—he was in the minor *The Lords of Flatbush*—wrote a screenplay with a boxing background. He brought it to Chartoff-Winkler Associates. The partners liked the script and visions of dealmaking danced in their heads. But Stallone added a small fillip: He must star in *Rocky* or no sale. The producers sized up the project and Stallone and took the gamble.

The background of the two producers hasn't the color of, say, Louis B. Mayer, but it didn't exactly promise a Hollywood future. Both are New Yorkers, and their careers were grounded in New York. Chartoff, with an eye toward the medical profession, took the requisite premed courses, but some work for a theatrical agent led him to Columbia, a law degree, and work in the theatrical field. Winkler started as a mail boy at the William Morris Agency, and rose to agent, working mostly in television. The two men met, formed a partnership, and fell into movies.

Twenty films later, including *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*, *Point Blank*, and *Up the Sandbox*—a few not yet released—Chartoff and Winkler still trust their instincts, manage to be on the set each day to keep an eye on their films, and keep constant watch for surprises like Sylvester Stallone. The colorful old boys would have approved.



Robert Chartoff



Irwin Winkler

Question: How did you two happen to hook up as producers?

Winkler: It was quite by accident. We're all in an industry that happened by accident, and success or failure in this industry, I believe is, to a large extent, determined by accident. We met by accident; we went into business together by accident. We've been in business together for eleven years now, and even before we started producing films we were in business together. We happened into it by a set of circumstances that happen probably once in a lifetime. The opportunities to become producers in the first place are very, very limited, and anybody who tells you otherwise is really not being frank with you. It's a tough business to get into, and we were lucky. It's as simple as that.

Chartoff: You know, everybody in this industry is looking for material, and we're no better than our material. I mean, the essence of making any picture is having a good script that will attract other elements. The ideal situation is to have a completed screenplay that somehow Steve McQueen comes to read and he wants to do. Then it doesn't matter who you are or whether you can write your name: You'll become a producer. That's the extreme. You go in gradations from there as to what it is to produce pictures. But the essence of production is the script, something that people want.

Question: What were you doing before your merger?

Winkler: I was an agent in television in New York, and Bob was an attorney in New York. We started getting involved with some film clients when we went into business for ourselves as managers. We represented some film companies and some film stars and some producers. Some producers didn't pay us a commission for doing what they were supposed to do so we decided to do it ourselves.

Question: You two were one of the first independent producing teams in Hollywood. What differences do you think that has made in your work?

Winkler: When we first started in this business at MGM, the producers who were making films in those days were Arthur Freed, Joe Pasternak, Pandro Berman, some really marvelous producers. We came in at the very beginning of what we like to call a new trend. It was, I guess, at the end of the old Hollywood way of doing things. The only picture we've ever done on a sound stage was *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* because that was the best way to shoot it. When we came along, maybe because we weren't trained in the Hollywood tradition, we shot in the streets. We thought that real locations would be more



appreciated by the audience, that they would give a sense of reality that we felt necessary for a good story. Our films tend to reflect our own backgrounds, our own families, our own education, and the traditions we come out of over many years of development.

We didn't come from film school. Bob and I really came from the streets. We didn't know anything about the making of films until we actually started to produce them. We didn't have the opportunity of sitting in a room talking to producers. We never even met producers. We learned as we went along. We didn't even have a background in film history. I wish we did, but we didn't. We know a lot more now, maybe because we've been involved in some films that deal with the early background of filmmaking. So our tradition is quite different from that of producers who worked in Hollywood under the old studio system. We were always independent producers. So our tradition is one of making a tradition, really, rather than copying a tradition.

Question: You say that you've preferred location shooting. What problems does that pose? For example, shooting in New York City, where you've made several films.

Winkler: It's not difficult; it's just more expensive. The union rates are much higher than they are here, about forty percent higher, so whatever costs you have, you have to figure that in.

Question: Do you find there's a recurring theme in your films?

Winkler: Strangely enough, by accident or otherwise, a great many of our films deal with people under stress. Probably three-quarters of our films, or maybe even ninety percent, deal with people under a very specific stress situation and how they respond to it. We've never sat down and consciously said, "Let's do the film because of that," but it seems if you examine *The New Centurions*, *The*

They Shoot Horses, Don't They?, a popular and critical success produced by Irwin Winkler and Robert Chartoff. Left, Michael Sarrazin and Jane Fonda; below, Bonnie Bedelia, Bruce Dern, Fonda, and Red Buttons.

Strawberry Statement, *Believe in Me*, *Leo the Last*, right down the list, you'll find that almost all the films deal with the same thing. It's exactly the story of *They Shoot Horses*. You take a group of people, put them under great stress, and see how they respond. It's what *Point Blank* was about, and it's what *The Gambler* was about. We respond, without even knowing it, to that material.

Question: After making so many films, do you have anything to say about what makes a commercially successful film?

Chartoff: There's no such thing as a patently commercial film. I mean, some people in the industry say that a

Charles Bronson picture is going to be successful per se. Some years back they said that about Elvis Presley. But there's no such thing, really, as that kind of film. Take *They Shoot Horses*. The book, I think, was written in 1938, and it was originally optioned by Charlie Chaplin to be made into a film. He never managed to get it financed, and several people had it subsequently without any success. We managed to do it, but it wasn't easy for us, either. Nobody had a vision that this was going to be an obviously successful picture.

Winkler: In fact, the feeling was quite the contrary on *They Shoot Horses*. Nobody thought it would be successful. It was successful, really, because it was a story well told, which is probably the answer to your question in a



Liza Minnelli, Martin Scorsese, and Robert DeNiro confer on the set of New York, New York, a musical drama set in New York City in the 1940s.

very general sense. I mean, you don't start out obviously to make a successful film by putting in all the ingredients that make for obvious success. I think *The Fortune*, the Mike Nichols film, was very obviously made to be a successful film. You take two big stars, Warren Beatty and Jack Nicholson. You take nostalgia. You do the film in a comedy setting with good old-fashioned music and a lot of old cars running around, and you think that this should be a successful film. Well, it wasn't. You can't go out and make a blatantly commercial film, I don't think. That's a bit cynical. I think you just have to tell a good story and keep your fingers crossed and hope that all the other things that go into a success are with you at the time.

Chartoff: Part of our job, a major part of our job, is to



convince financiers that a picture will be successful. When we approach people to raise money to make a picture we try to point out all the commercial possibilities. We don't say to them that a picture is not particularly commercial. That isn't the approach we take. It's a very positive one. *Point Blank*, for example, was relatively easy to sell because there was violence in the picture and other elements that we could point out to justify making the investment.

Question: Who are you talking about when you say "financiers"?

Chartoff: In our case, we're talking about the film studios.

Question: Do you have any postmortems on a film

like *The Gambler*, which was not a hit, though it got some critical attention? How did it come about?

Winkler: Well, I think it's almost impossible to really determine why a film fails or succeeds. That's something the mystery of which I don't think either Bob or I could ever solve. But the genesis of that film is that an agent brought us a very early draft of a screenplay that had a very good idea but wasn't well written. We gave it to the director Karel Reisz in London, whom we've always admired, and he was interested in developing it. Over the course of about a year the script was reshaped and rewritten until it was in final form. We then gave it to Jimmy Caan and he said he wanted to do it, and we proceeded under the umbrella of Paramount Pictures.

Chartoff: This was an instance as well where the director worked very closely with the writer from virtually the inception, for about a year, before he even knew if the picture would be made. That doesn't seem to be happening very often.

Question: Were you concerned about how *The Gambler* would be received? I understand, for example, that the male-world aspect of the film turned off many women.

Chartoff: We were concerned about the fact that the picture was very depressing and wondered how an audience would respond, and to soothe our own feelings in anticipation of the release, this is the kind of thing we said to ourselves: "Well, *Midnight Cowboy* was a very depressing film...."

Winkler: *They Shoot Horses* was very depressing, too. In fact, *Midnight Cowboy* was a film not that different from *The Gambler*, and yet it was an enormous success. We just try to tell a good story, that's all. You don't sit down and think, are women going to react negatively to it? You just say, "This is a good story." That's the only criterion you have: You want to have a good story, and your primary concern is to tell it well and execute it well.

Question: Is a good story an instinctive thing for you?

Chartoff: Strictly intuitive.

Question: If your intuitions should differ, how do you come to a meeting of the minds?

Chartoff: We're two individuals and the degree of our enthusiasm necessarily has to differ in certain instances. So there are times when one of us feels more strongly toward a subject than the other. It's only natural. I don't

Rudolf Nureyev stars in the Chartoff-Winkler production, Valentino. Winkler credits his secretary for suggesting Nureyev for the part.

think there's ever been a situation where one of us wanted to do something and the other said, "No, we shouldn't do it." We talk about it. There's give-and-take, but no kind of dogmatism.

Winkler: I might read a script and come back and say, "It's really funny," and Bob will read it and say, "Gee, I don't think it's very funny." Maybe I'll read it again and disagree with him again; maybe we'll talk about it. But, basically, we've been together so long that we seem to have similar tastes in material, so we don't disagree that often. And when we do disagree, we're mature enough to allow the other if he feels strongly enough about something to do it. It's like a marriage to some extent. You can't maintain a relationship with another individual in any sense unless you allow the other one to have his own opinion and an opportunity to prove himself right or wrong. That's basically the nature of our relationship.

Question: Do you divide your functions?

Chartoff: We don't.

Winkler: We interrupt each other.

Chartoff: We tend to veer off at the time of production, because it's just too much for two people to be on a picture. Irwin and I have never had any specific discussion about who was going to do what on a particular picture.

Winkler: When a film starts to get into the very specific process of preproduction, which is usually about eight or ten weeks before we actually start shooting, and through the process of principal photography and probably through the very early cuts, one of us usually takes the responsibility.

Chartoff: But we both tend to be around, and we'll look at dailies and comment to each other. At that point, one of us will go to the director if there are questions that have to be raised.

Question: Is this on location?

Chartoff: Only one of us tends to go on any given location.

Question: Do you ever find it a mix-up to have several projects going at once?

Chartoff: Yes.

Winkler: We try to prevent it when we can. We try not to do too many films. We have a very good percentage of films that we put into development that ultimately are produced. The reason is that we tend to put a great deal of energy into



the projects that we believe in. We tend not to overclutter our desks with too many things, because then you end up dissipating all your energies and nothing gets done.

Question: Where do you find the material for your films?

Chartoff: Like everyone else, we're exposed to a variety of material. We read things, experience them.

Winkler: For example, for *The Strawberry Statement*, we bought the rights to James Kunen's article about the Columbia uprising after it appeared in *New York* magazine. We bought the story two weeks afterward, and we had no idea of the student unrest that was going to come in this country. We thought it was an interesting story about a young man under a stress situation, and we bought it for that reason. But it took us about a year to get a screenplay that we liked out of it, and then it took another year or year and a half to get made. The political situation caught up with a story that we recognized as a good story, but we didn't buy it because it was a contemporary story about political unrest. One of the biggest problems is spotting a story that we like and knowing that we're going to have to release that film two years from now. We can't figure out what the trends are going to be two years from now.

Chartoff: I think we were very pleased with *The Strawberry Statement* as well as some of our other films that gave us an opportunity of presenting a point of view consistent with our own feelings and our own philosophy. In *Strawberry Statement* we had a chance to show an insight into what these kids were about. Many people thought these kids were criminals. We had an opportunity to present them in a light that appealed to us very greatly, and we were proud to have the chance to do that.

Question: Do you allot time simply to hunt for material for films?



Chartoff: It's very hard. One of the great burdens we have is reading scripts on the weekends. You come home, it's a beautiful day, you've got six scripts to read. You read them, none of them are any good, and you've blown the day. It becomes a little discouraging, but you have to do it.

Winkler: When you've done it for five or seven or eight years in a row, it gets rough. People send in scripts and they say, "Why don't they get read?" Well, everything gets read eventually, but I'll tell you, the burden is absolutely mind-boggling. There are so many scripts that come in. We have readers give us a synopsis, so that if a script comes in and it's, say, about a dentist in San Francisco you can eliminate it initially. But if it's an idea you like and the reader says, "This is absolutely atrociously written," you might look at it for a couple of days just to check up on your reader. If you can get by fifteen or twenty pages on the weekend while your wife says, "Let's get out of the house," and it holds you, then you keep going. You hope it's going to be something very good.

Chartoff: And it rarely is.

Question: Are you within the privy circle that gets to see the first galley of books for possible film material?

Chartoff: It's certainly easier if we get the first look at galley, but traditionally that hasn't been the source of our material. We've bought books but we've tended to develop material ourselves—hire writers to work on material or find books that have been around. Perhaps the reason for this is that when we started we didn't have any money to speak of and we couldn't afford to buy new books. Our approach seemed to work, and we've continued with it. Of course, we love to get a good book. If we can get a first look at a new book and buy it, our job is made all the easier.

Question: How are new books channeled to you?

Chartoff: Through agents, and then we have friends who are writers and they might bring books to us. You develop relationships over the years and that helps. But essentially we develop things ourselves.

Question: What's your usual process in developing a project?

Winkler: There are several processes involved, depending, to a large extent, on who comes up with the idea. Sometimes we'll be sitting in the office, and one of us will say, "I've got a terrific idea for a film." We'll talk about it among ourselves, and we'll say, "OK, yeah, let's see if we can develop that." We'll call up a writer whom we think is right for that particular idea, let him work on it, and see if he can develop that to the next step, which is either an outline or right into a screenplay. That's one way.

Another way would be for a writer to come in and say, "I have this idea for a film; I'd like to develop it," and we'll consider it if we want him to do it. Another method is that somebody will bring us a finished screenplay—which is rare, by the way—that we like. We get a lot of screenplays, but not very often one we like. The best situation is when you get a terrific screenplay and you say, "Let's shoot it," and you buy it and you go out and get a director and you get your actors and you make your movie. That's the ultimate situation.

Question: You work with a writer in developing the film?

Winkler: That's basically what our job is. It's what a good producer should be doing. He should be developing ideas with writers, developing screenplays, and getting ideas into a form that will make them readily financed, cast, and produced.

Chartoff: Obviously, the greatest satisfaction we get is when we participate personally in the material. If it hap-

The Gambler, with James Caan as a professor in debt to a syndicate and Lauren Hutton as his girl friend. As a box-office gamble it failed.

*S*P*Y*S reunited Donald Sutherland and Elliott Gould as two inept agents after their successful teaming in M*A*S*H.*

pens to be an idea or even if we buy a book, to the extent that we can become involved ourselves we become more satisfied.

Question: How involved do you get in casting?

Winkler: Pretty involved. We usually supervise all the casting, sometimes down to the smallest bits.

Chartoff: It's a very important element in a picture, the casting. It can be the most important element, especially if a picture is miscast. We want to be there when the decisions are made.

Question: Speaking of casting, your choice of Jane

Fonda for *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* seemed bold at the time. Her previous picture, after all, had been *Barbarella*.

Winkler: We had to convince the financiers that Jane Fonda could do this kind of dramatic movie. That was the job, convincing people that Jane Fonda at that point in her career was capable. Now it's easy to convince people that Jane Fonda is a marvelous actress, but at that point it was not easy and it was a job we had to do.

Chartoff: But they were favorably disposed to Jane Fonda also.

Question: Did the morose or downbeat tone of *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* pose a problem in getting it made?

Chartoff: There are too many instances of successful films that have been downbeat, and to make that the criterion of whether you make a picture or not, I think, would diminish the opportunity to see many great films.

Winkler: For example, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* ended up with both Paul Newman and Robert Redford being killed. In *Midnight Cowboy*, Dustin Hoffman dies at the end. There are many successful films where the principal people die at the end or which end unhappily. A lot of people think that some sort of formula for success is to have a happy ending.

Chartoff: The only one who makes Disney films is Disney.

Question: How do you as producers approach a sizable movie like *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* and a smaller movie like *Point Blank*?

Winkler: Strangely enough, they were shot by the same cameraman. I think you supply the production facilities as they are necessary for a particular story. *Point Blank* was a very spare kind of film, very lean. We only shot 69,000 feet of film on that picture. It really was a tight little film, cut in the camera. *They Shoot Horses* was shot in a more sprawling manner. It had a big panorama; we wanted a sense of size. These people were caught in a microcosm of the world, and in a specific way they were enveloped by it. We wanted that panoramic sense, people, excitement around them all the time operating on their emotions.

Chartoff: Also, it wasn't necessarily more difficult from a production point of view to do one picture than the other. In the sense that we had more money to do *They Shoot Horses*, we had more time to prepare it. We were able to hire the people, like the art director and the production designer, that we needed. It is a more immense picture to



make, but the challenge isn't necessarily greater because of the scenery or the sets or the number of extras. To get extras you just pick up the phone and make a call. It's not particularly difficult, but it takes money. That's really what's difficult.

Question: Do you feel equally comfortable with each type of production?

Winkler: You're uncomfortable when you're in a lousy picture, I'll tell you that.

Chartoff: Sometimes you know it very quickly, and it's not a happy situation.

Question: When have you felt that?

Winkler: Many times.

Question: Specifically?

Winkler: I feel uncomfortable even talking about it.

Question: You said before that you went into your first production, *Point Blank*, with little experience in films. What did that first experience teach you?

Chartoff: I think, simply, what we learned from the beginning was not to rely solely on anybody else's judgment. If you're not sure about something and somebody else is, be sure you come to agree with him before you commit yourself to whatever that judgment entails. There are infinite numbers of decisions we have to make as producers, and we tend to participate in almost every one—not on the floor when the director is shooting the picture, of course. That would be chaotic, anarchy if we did that. But in general we just tend to be skeptical about things, and I suppose that's what we learned very early on.

Question: Skepticism isn't a quality the old studio producers could exercise very much.

Chartoff: Studio producers were essentially employees of studios. Material was designated to them, and they had to make the pictures that they were told to make. In general, that was the case. As independents, of course, we don't deal with that kind of situation at all. We choose our own material.

Question: A number of producers were formerly agents. Is that trend continuing?

Winkler: The grand old men—Louis B. Mayer, Samuel Goldwyn, Harry Cohn, Jack Warner, Carl Laemmle—who started the film industry never developed any young

men to pass on the mantle to. They controlled the industry single-handedly. They made all the decisions, and they ran things the way they wanted to. About twenty or twenty-five years ago, when some of these men started to retire or pass on, there was nobody around to take over the industry. The only real training ground for the new form of filmmaking, which was packaging, became the agencies.

The studios got very nervous when television first came in in the late 1940s and very early 1950s, and they suddenly dropped all their staff producers and all their directors and everybody else they had under contract. Suddenly the star system became a very independent system, because stars were no longer under contract to studios. The stars, therefore, had to rely on whoever was closest to them for advice about what pictures to choose, etc. They went to



The Strawberry Statement, Winkler's favorite among his productions. Below, student protester Bruce Davison in the final scene; right, Davison and girl friend Kim Darby confront shopkeeper James Coco.

their agents, who were the only people still around. The agents suddenly took on a great deal of the responsibility that was formerly held by the studios, and agencies became the training ground for future studio executives.

If you look around you, all the major studios, except one, are now run by former agents. Universal is owned by the old MCA people; Lew Wasserman and Sid Sheinberg are all people who came out of the agency business. The chairman of Warner Bros. is Ted Ashley, who is a former agent; Guy McElwaine, who is now head of production, is a former agent. David Begelman, head of Columbia Pictures, is a former agent. The executive vice-president and head of all production at Twentieth Century-Fox is Alan Ladd, Jr., who is a former agent. The head of West Coast production for United Artists is Mike Medavoy, a former



agent. All the studios except for MGM are run by former agents.

The agencies seem to be the outstanding training ground for studio executives and, of course, for producers as well. It's the only place, except for the film schools (which have only been a very recent occurrence), where people can learn the film business. I started many years ago as a forty dollars-a-week messenger boy at the William Morris Agency. That's how I learned the business, and that's the case with most of the producers and studio executives today.

Chartoff: The reality of making films today is packaging, which was not the case two or three decades ago. Then the studios—which by definition included house writers, house directors, house actors—simply had to decide, “Yes, we want to make a film,” and all of the elements would come together. Today that is no longer the case, as we all know. What we have to do is find the scripts, find the writers, find the directors, try to convince the actors to do the pictures, and each step has its own responsibilities. Agents are particularly qualified to do so because they know the writers, the directors, and the actors. It has been a very simple and logical step for them to become involved in either the production end or the studio end of this industry.

Winkler: I think that's going to continue.

Question: Some people tend to speak disparagingly about agents and lawyers who become studio heads. They complain that they aren't “movie people,” as the old studio heads were.

Winkler: I don't think the old studio heads were any different. They came from varied backgrounds. Sam Goldwyn was a glove maker, and Louis B. Mayer was a junk dealer. They didn't have any tradition; they started it all. I don't know how anyone can talk disparagingly about



Leo the Last, with Billie Whitelaw and Marcello Mastroianni, was an offbeat film that never quite came off.

a group of people that are now responsible for an industry that has had the highest grosses since 1946. The film business is attracting the largest audience in the last thirty years. Things are not so bad, and I guess they're not doing a terrible job.

Chartoff: I think we all tend to talk disparagingly about a studio executive when we have a script and we believe in it and we want to see the picture made and he doesn't want to invest in it. We get angry about it and we tend to disparage that individual, but in general I think the choice of studio executives today is as logical as any other choice. There's one distinction: Most agents really have no on-the-line experience. They don't know what it takes to make a picture. They have no idea of the realities of financing a picture, how much it's going to cost. I think when these various agents do come to the studios, at least initially, there's a fault in their judgment. But ultimately if they're bright, and most of them are bright—otherwise they wouldn't get to this position anyway—they learn. If you make a mistake once or twice, by the third time you start to catch on.

Question: Mr. Chartoff, you're the lawyer in the partnership. Have lawyers gone the same route to studio executive positions and how have they gone about it?

Winkler: The first thing you have to do is fail the bar examination.

Chartoff: I never failed the bar examination. But there are lawyers who negotiate in every company. There is a man who tends to be very high up in the company who is the so-called chief negotiator. When it comes to the crunch of making the decision, he has to sit down and go over all the terms and all the conditions. That tends to be the responsibility of the studio lawyer. Now he also is learning his craft, and he, too, could probably evolve into a studio

executive or maybe even a producer.

Question: You said earlier that you came to films with little background. Do you tend to give new directors, with little background, the opportunity to do your films?

Winkler: We have done it traditionally. *Point Blank* was John Boorman's first film, and he went on to *Deliverance* and many other films. We've started out several directors.

Chartoff: But let me say that our preference is to go with a director who has experience. It's a grueling job, and it requires many elements of experience that aren't needed to produce pictures. We started without any experience whatsoever, but I don't think you can pull someone off the street, to give you the extreme example, to direct a picture. I think we'd be skeptical about hiring someone, for example, whose experience is solely theater.

Question: What gave you the confidence in John Boorman?

Winkler: We met him in London on a trip that we had taken. We thought he was extremely intelligent, and we gave him the script. We discussed at great length with him about how he would do it. I said it was his first film but it was his first major film; he had just done one other little film that was a terrible failure but that we thought was quite interesting. We thought he'd do a fine film, and we hired him.

Chartoff: But beyond that he was one of the few directors we knew at that time. I mean, we were impressed with anybody who knew which side of the camera he was looking through, because we didn't, and that had something to do with it as well.

Question: If you hire a director and you find that your creative judgments are clashing, what's your recourse?

Chartoff: We tend to find that directors, like we are with each other and most people, are rational. If we can all agree enough to decide, "Yes, we want to make this picture," and we agree with each other to go ahead with the film, we don't seem to have very many communication problems with directors. Obviously, there comes a point when somebody has to make a decision if there's a disagreement, and often we'll give way to the director. Not every time, but often.

Winkler: Then again it depends on the director. It depends on his own stature and his own experience. If it's a young director, somebody who probably needs a bit more guid-

On the set of Nickelodeon: Ryan O'Neal, Burt Reynolds, Chaffoff, and Winkler. The producers picked film historian Peter Bogdanovich to direct the story of filmmaking's early days.

ance, you tend to be more forceful in your opinions. But if you're dealing with somebody who has had a great deal of success and you have a great deal of faith in his opinion, even if it clashes with your own, you might tend to go with his opinion. I think each case is separate, but we've found it very, very rare when a director has had to be replaced.

Question: Do you tend to involve your directors in the preparation of the script?

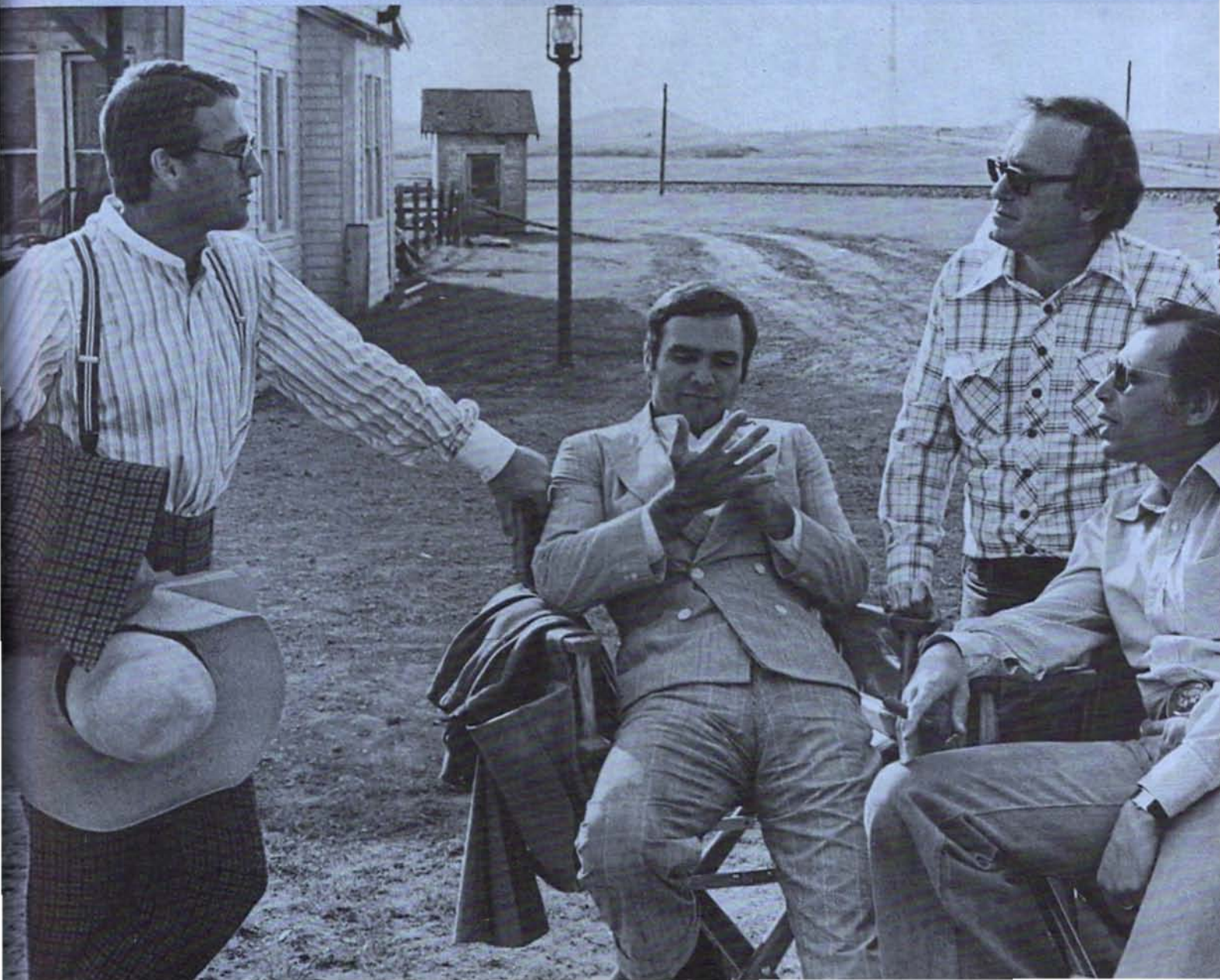
Chaffoff: On a pragmatic level, directors today tend to become involved a little later. They generally do not choose to participate heavily on an idea, and that's something that we seem to have to work on with writers. It's only after the screenplay is written that directors—I'm

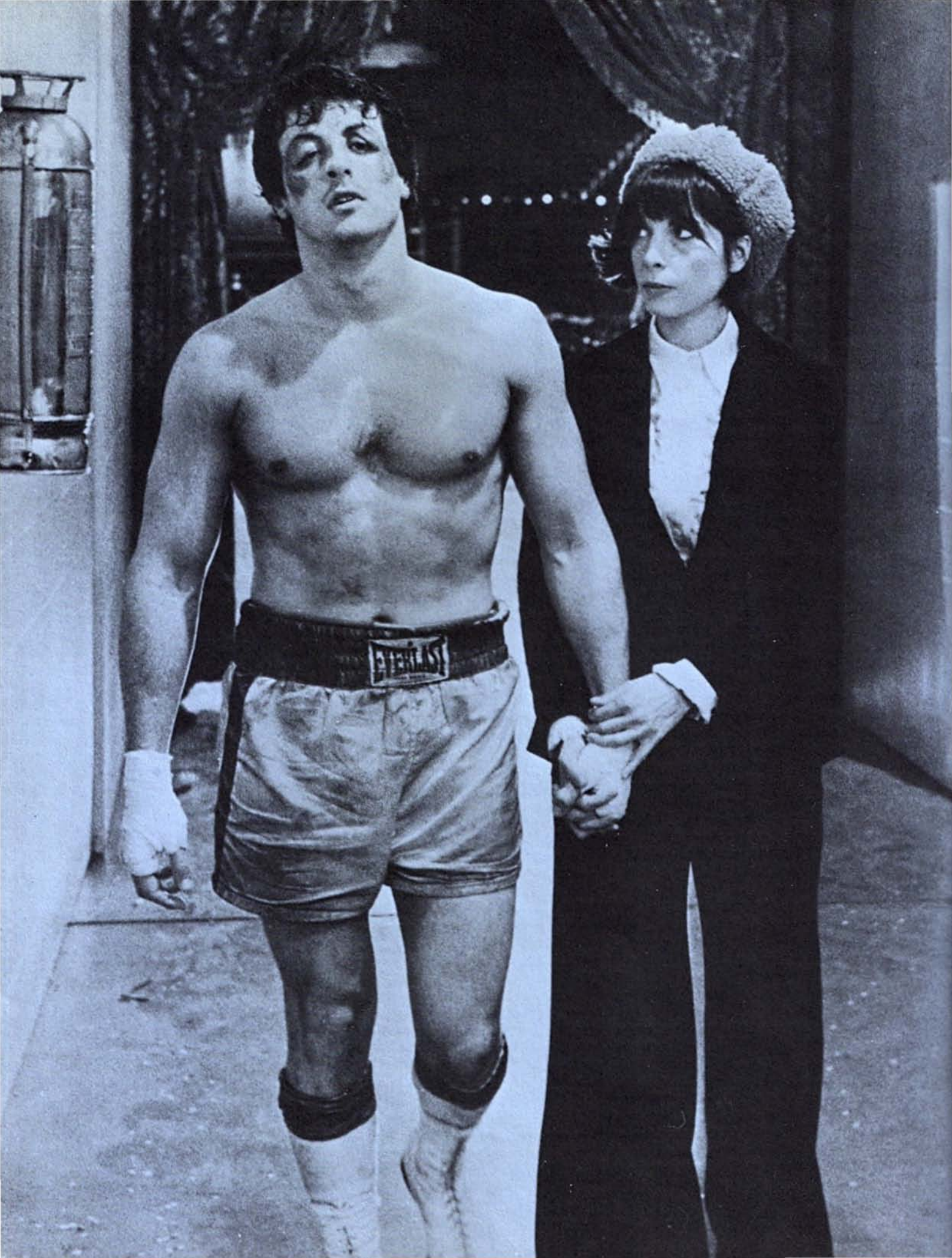
talking about the more successful directors—tend to become involved. It doesn't happen all the time, but as a general rule it does.

Question: Why don't they become involved?

Winkler: The auteurs don't seem to be autoring very much.

Chaffoff: I think that one of the reasons, probably, is that as producers we may be developing five or six or seven projects at one time. If a director says, "Yes, this is the one I want to make," and he works on it for a year for very little money or sometimes nothing, at the end of the year if the screenplay doesn't work he's left high and dry. Therefore,





Rocky, the story of a club fighter: left, Sylvester Stallone (screenwriter and star) and Talia Shire; right, Winkler, Chartoff, director John Avildsen, Stallone, and assistant director Fred Gallo.

most of the so-called successful directors—and I mean this in the financial sense—tend to feel that it's more efficient, effective, that they have a better opportunity to express themselves more consistently, if they simply wait until the screenplays are ready and have been submitted.

Winkler: They're not involved in that very early risk period of developing an idea. When they say, "OK, we'll do this screenplay," a financier will come along and guarantee them a certain amount, usually a substantial amount, of income. They then know they're going to be making a film. But when you deal with the very seed of an idea, because the risks are so great of never getting a successful screenplay, then they're hesitant.

Question: Along that line, what's the percentage, roughly, of your development deals that don't come off?

Chartoff: It's not calculable, really, not relevantly calculable, but it's certainly less than half. Our percentage is probably very high compared to most producers.

Question: What do you think of current film writing? Do you find a consistent weakness in new writing?

Winkler: Mostly in structure, I find. I think a lot of young writers read Pauline Kael and that's a big problem for them, and probably admire too many Robert Altman films, which is also a problem. Films really have to be structured. You have to tell a story, and you have to have a beginning, a middle, and an end. If you're all over the lot, you're going to have a great deal of difficulty keeping your audience interested, which is true of most Altman films, by the way. Even *Nashville*, which is supposed to be his great success, is not a very commercial film. Its success is pretty good by the standards of previous Altman films, but it's not a very successful film. I think you have to structure a story in the finest traditions of storytelling, and what we find with most young writers we work with is if there's a failure, it tends to be in the structure of the story.

Chartoff: I can recall reading a script that opens with the principal character on the plains somewhere in the Dakotas. He looks over a precipice, and as far as he can see there are herds of buffalo, miles of buffalo, and ultimately they go on a rampage that he says lasts for about eighteen hours. As a producer I'm on page two trying to calculate where the hell we're going to get all these buffalo. Take sheep and put buffalo suits on them? So I never got to page three. But new writers don't tend to consider the problems that we have to face in terms of cost, and we often have to advise them of that.

Question: If you come up with the idea for a script, is the writer's pay scaled down accordingly?



Chartoff: It depends on the writer, it depends on the idea, it depends on whether or not anyone wants to make the picture, on how much the picture will cost. But writers tend to make the most money for a script if they complete it independently and submit it to producers or directors.

Winkler: Then the law of supply and demand starts to operate. You have one script that a lot of people want and people start bidding on it. That's the ultimate situation for a writer.

Question: Let's talk about finances. How does an independent producer make his money? How do you determine how much to spend on a new project?

Chartoff: Traditionally, producers get a percentage of the profits, and they also get a salary from studios for working on pictures. As for the initial sums that are spent on the making of a picture, it depends upon the risk involved. For example, the James Kunen story in *New York* magazine got no great enthusiasm from the studios. So we knew that this was a high-risk situation and there was a strong probability that we'd never make the picture. We assessed it and made a business judgment that we would pursue it if we could buy it at a price that we considered to be fair. When it came to *The New Centurions*, we thought it was going to become a hot book; it wasn't when it first came out. We had to pay a lot of money for it, but we thought it was worth it to do it.

Generally, the agents whom we tend to buy from are not naive and have a sense of the marketplace. If we're going into something where they think there's a demand, they'll raise the price and ask for more money. They'll ask for more money up front or all the money up front. If we want to know about a book that was written in 1953 that nobody ever optioned or cared about, we know, and they know, that there's no demand for that book. It's been seen by all the studios, probably, and nobody had any interest. So if we should come along and say, "We're going to try to

develop it," they know we're going to be prepared to put up very little risk capital and take the chance.

Question: Is there a certain amount of agent bluff about what's hot and what's not?

Chartoff: It's happened. But we can only go by our own feelings about what we think is hot. There are a lot of agents in this town, and over the years you tend to limit yourself to the ones whom you rely upon in the first instance, understanding that they're all salesmen. They make their living by selling you books or stories. You understand they have a vested interest in anything they're selling.

Sometimes they do outbluff us. Sometimes there's something we like, and they'll say, "Well, Dick Zanuck wants it as well," and we might say, "We'd better make an offer today," and we might feel that we have to double our offer because we want to buy it before he does. So we can be conned like anyone else. But we try not to be, that's all.

Question: If backing for a movie is hard to come by, how long do you persist in trying to get funding?

Chartoff: We're considered to be tenacious, more so than most people in the industry, and if there's something we like we're always on it. We're always looking for financing, especially if we believe in it that strongly.

Question: Whom do you contact first when you have a project you want to get off the ground?

Winkler: It depends on the studio. In some places it's the president of the studio that you discuss it with; in other places it may be the executive vice-president in charge of production; it might be the chairman of the board; another place it might be the reader.

Chartoff: It depends on what you've got. If it's a script or

an idea or if it's a package, you need different amounts of money so you pick different approaches.

Question: Are you involved in the distribution side of your films?

Chartoff: Each studio has different attitudes about the producer's function in distribution, but in general we try to do as much as we can, participate as much as we can, as we do in every other aspect of making a film. We generally tend to be very involved during the first month of the release of the picture. That's to establish the patterns of publicity and the principal theaters in the major markets. After that, when the picture starts fanning out, we tend to be on to other things and don't get into it too heavily. That doesn't mean that we ignore that process, but the extent of our influence diminishes.

Winkler: It's tougher to get a man in Cincinnati who's responsible for that area to respond to all your suggestions, because you must assume that he knows a little more about what sells in Cincinnati than we do sitting out here in Los Angeles. But we do supervise the initial ad campaign. The distributor usually shows us the ads, and we participate in the planning of the ads. We usually participate in the release pattern of the film—where it's going to play initially, when it's going to break. We usually plan for the time of year that the picture is going to open, because the distributors must rely on us to give them a release date.

Question: Which of your movies stand out in your minds?

Winkler: There are two I'm particularly fond of—*They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* and *The Strawberry Statement*, which is my favorite film. In fact, I think it was the most meaningful film of all those that dealt with the sixties. It was the only film made during the sixties that dealt with the war in Vietnam, with the CIA, and the FBI. It pre-

Films Produced by Chartoff-Winkler

Double Trouble—MGM—Directed by Norman Taurog—1967
Point Blank—MGM—John Boorman—1967
The Split—MGM—Gordon Flemyng—1968
They Shoot Horses, Don't They?—Cinerama Releasing Corporation—Sydney Pollack—1969
Leo the Last—United Artists—John Boorman—1970
The Strawberry Statement—MGM—Stuart Hagmann—1970
Believe in Me—MGM—Stuart Hagmann—1971
The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight—MGM—James Goldstone—1971
The New Centurions—Columbia Pictures—Richard Fleischer—1972

The Mechanic—United Artists—Michael Winner—1972
Up the Sandbox—National General Pictures—Irvin Kershner—1972
Busting—United Artists—Peter Hyams—1974
*S*P*Y*S*—Twentieth Century-Fox—Irvin Kershner—1974
The Gambler—Paramount Pictures—Karel Reisz—1974
Breakout—Columbia Pictures—Tom Gries—1975
Peeper—Twentieth Century-Fox—Peter Hyams—1975
Nickelodeon—Columbia Pictures—Peter Bogdanovich—1976
Rocky—United Artists—John Avildsen—1976
New York, New York—United Artists—Martin Scorsese—scheduled to be released in 1977
Valentino—United Artists—Ken Russell—scheduled to be released in 1977



Point Blank: left, Lee Marvin and Michael Strong; below, Angie Dickinson, Marvin, and Carroll O'Connor. John Boorman's stylized thriller was also the first Chartoff-Winkler collaboration.

dated all that's happened. If you look at it now, you'll find it probably was the most important film made during that period. Totally ignored, by the way, by the liberal press. It was a very important, meaningful film, and I'm particularly proud of it. I'm very sad that the people who killed it were the critics and the so-called liberal press.

Question: Was the timing on its release wrong, do you think?

Winkler: The picture came out four days after the kids at Kent State were killed. *The Strawberry Statement* ends with a student riot and a child getting killed. Some of the critics who are famous and knowledgeable about filmmaking said that we were exploiting Kent State. And the picture came out four days afterward! If we could put together a film in four days.... It gives you an idea of how much they know about filmmaking.

I thought *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* was a very well-made film and very clearly dealt with how people respond to physical and mental pressure. I've always been interested in that subject, and the movie predated all the nostalgia films.

Question: *Nickelodeon*, the film Peter Bogdanovich has directed for you, is scheduled to open this month. How did it come about, particularly since Bogdanovich has had three flops lately?

Winkler: Two. Peter has had three successes and two failures. So that's three out of five, which is about as good a track record as anyone in Hollywood; most people have none out of five. But the genesis of the film is very simple. We had an idea for a movie; we hired a writer; we developed a screenplay called "Starlight Parade" which later became *Nickelodeon*. We then submitted the screenplay simultaneously to the studios and to Peter, whom we thought would be a marvelous director for this picture, because he is a film historian and *Nickelodeon* is about the

making of early films. We made a deal with Columbia and then with Peter, who proceeded to rewrite it and shape it according to whatever feelings he had. Then we cast it, and that's basically how a picture gets into production.

Question: Martin Scorsese is doing *New York, New York* for you. Does a musical involve some risks these days?

Winkler: It only involves risks if it's not done well.

Question: Few musical films have been made in recent years, though.

Winkler: I think it's mostly because of story. Hardly



anybody came up with a story that was appealing. Musicals historically come from Broadway, but Broadway musicals haven't been made as much as they used to be. They've been mostly revivals, though I think they will come back because producers are looking for new areas of entertainment. But basically I think the lack of story is the prime factor in the lack of musicals.

Question: Is *New York, New York* your first musical?

Winkler: No, we did *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*

Question: You regard it as a musical?

Winkler: There's a lot of music in it. I don't know what

Winkler and Chartoff on the set of New York, New York. They try to oversee a film's production without stifling the director's ideas.

you call a musical and what you don't. I don't know what the definition is. I think *They Shoot Horses* is a movie with music, and it's a musical.

Question: What led to the choice of Scorsese?

Winkler: The background canvas for the film is the Big Band Era and the music that was inherent in that period. But the story is about two people and their relationship. I don't think anyone could ever question Scorsese's feeling for people in any of his films. I thought it would be interesting to get someone who could deal with that relationship and also have the imagination to deal with music.

Question: Is *Valentino*, now in production, focused solely on Valentino's life?

Winkler: It's a biography, but through the biography you see an era, you see the opulence of Hollywood during the twenties, how America was in that specific place at that time. The story is about a man who was considered the greatest sex symbol of all time and yet who himself is not thoroughly convinced of his own manliness.



Question: Did you or Mr. Chartoff come up with the choice of Rudolf Nureyev to play the lead?

Winkler: Actually, I think it was my secretary. We were sitting around, and we wanted to go with someone who had the great magnetism that Valentino had. There weren't many choices.

Question: What new projects are you planning?

Winkler: The next picture we're going to do will start early in May. It's going to be directed by Alan Pakula and stars Jane Fonda and James Caan. It's called "Comes a Horseman" by Dennis Clark. The movie takes place in 1945 in the Midwest and deals with the changing times and how people's lives are affected—old ideals and people whose morality is very traditional against the changing times.

We're planning to do another film with Sylvester Stallone next year. He's writing an original script, but I'd rather not talk about it yet. Otherwise, we're trying to take it easy a little bit.

Question: What kind of consideration do you give to the critics?

Winkler: We give a great deal of consideration to the critics when they give us a good review. We ignore them when they give us a bad review. We find that some of the very biggest successes are badly reviewed. *The Exorcist* is a case in point; it was a terribly reviewed film and was very well received. I think you find that very often. The critics are really not that much of a barometer as far as the success or failure of a film. *Scenes From a Marriage* was a great film and the critics all loved it, but the critics didn't have much of an impact on the box office. If they hadn't liked *Scenes From a Marriage* and it had been very poorly reviewed, it probably wouldn't have done any business at all. In other words, in an art film they probably do have some amount of influence, but basically the qualifications of the critics come into question. Just because a guy has a big, bushy mustache and a sense of humor doesn't qualify him to tell you what you should see.

Chartoff: We're very sensitive to bad reviews; we don't like to see them. Sometimes if the picture is bad we expect them; we can even understand that it's right. But if it's something we believe in, we get hurt by it.

Question: Do you make a distinction between a good film and a successful film?

Winkler: We really don't go out cynically to make a commercial film. We don't go out to make a noncommercial film. We try to tell a good story. We assume that if you tell a story well people will be attracted, and they'll want to go out and pay their \$3.50 or \$4 to see the film because it's a good movie. *Jaws* is a good film, it's marvelous filmmaking, but you can't equate that kind of filmmaking with Ingmar Bergman's filmmaking. They are two different kinds of storytelling, both very good but both very different. You just have to tell your own story in any way you see that's fit for yourself, really. Whatever means quality to you is what you have to do.

AFI NEWS

A newsletter about film and television activities of special interest to the American Film Institute members.

LIFE ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: In 1931, Universal Pictures signed young stage actress Bette Davis to a six-month contract and immediately assigned her to a series of B-films. Forty-five years later, with a screen career that includes more than 80 films, two Academy Awards for Best Actress and eight Oscar nominations, Bette Davis has been named recipient of AFI's fifth annual Life Achievement Award. Ms. Davis' durability is only part of her achievement. Her performances in such films as Of Human Bondage, The Little Foxes, and All About Eve have been acclaimed by critics and the public, and her films are often the subject of revivals in repertory theaters. The award will be presented in March in a ceremony which will be taped for broadcast by CBS Television. Previous winners of the Life Achievement Award were John Ford, James Cagney, Orson Welles, and William Wyler.

FILM STUDY AT MOMA: With courses in film study becoming more popular at universities, other institutions are becoming involved in film education. The Museum of Modern Art, over the last 40 years, has become one of the world's leading film archives, with an extensive collection of films and stills available to serious scholars. Now, thanks to a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Museum will offer four film courses. The courses, open to the public, and their instructors are: "The Narrative Film: Changes in Form and Style," Frank Daniel; "The Essence of Cinema," Peter Kubelka; "Antonioni: The Artist as Thinker," William Arrowsmith; and "The Documentary Impulse," James Blue. Scott Nygren, formerly of the State University of New York at Buffalo, was named to coordinate the "Looking at Film" program.

GETTING CENTERED: For those students interested in the more practical side of film study, the AFI's Center for Advanced Film Studies is now accepting applications for next year's courses in directing, screenwriting, producing, and cinematography. The Center offers a one-year graduate program to students with a basic education in the arts and humanities. March 1 is the deadline for applications for the 1977-78 school year. To obtain a brochure describing the curriculum and application forms, write Center Admissions, Department X, The American Film Institute, 501 Doheny Road, Beverly Hills, CA 90210.

OUT OF THE PAST: During the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan looked to films as a means of recruiting potential Klansmen. A six-reel promotion film, The Toll of Justice, was produced to encourage "red-blooded Americans" to don the white robes of the Klan. Four reels of this film were recently donated by Glenn Photo Supply of Encino, California, to the AFI Archives....Another period of American history is preserved on film in The Fighting Priest, A Pictorial View of the Man of the Hour, a one-reel portrait of the controversial arch-conservative radio priest of the 1930s, Father Charles Coughlin. A print of the film was recently acquired by the Library of Congress Archives....Two years ago, Jean Tucker of the Library of Congress persuaded silent film actress Miriam Cooper to will to the Library her personal collection of photographs, clippings, and correspondence. Ms. Cooper, who was featured in D.W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation and Intolerance, died in April, and the settlement of her estate is expected to benefit film scholars of the silent era.

THEATER BENEFIT: AFI annually presents more than 600 American and foreign films in its Kennedy Center theater, but the expenses necessary to maintain the quality of the programs are enormous. To offset these costs, the theater staff has devised a variety of benefits, among them the sale of movie posters, stills and T-shirts. All members and patrons interested in aiding the theater should send donations or inquiries to AFI Theater Appeal, Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C. 20566.

FUTURE FILMMAKERS: Frank Capra and Barbara Loden Kazan are judging the filmmakers of tomorrow at the sixth annual Washington National Student Film Festival, held December 3-4 at the AFI Theater in Kennedy Center and the University of Maryland's Hoff Theater. Entries will be eligible for cash and equipment prizes. The winners will gain additional exposure from a special PBS television program featuring their films.

FOREIGN FILM TOUR: The flood into the U.S. in the 1960s of foreign films has slowed to a trickle. But thanks to the AFI Regional Films program, patrons of films will have the rare opportunity in coming months to see series of films from Iran and Finland. The eight-film Iranian series, the first of its kind in the U.S., is available to non-profit institutions through summer, 1977. The ten-film Finnish series will be screened at the AFI Theater in February, and will then be available for tour. Interested institutions able to screen 35mm films should contact the AFI Regional Film Coordinator at the Kennedy Center for further information.

PEOPLE NEWS: Marvin Goldman, partner of Washington, D.C.'s K-B Theaters, was elected president of the National Association of Theater Owners at the NATO convention in Anaheim, California. Goldman has also been elected to a seat on the AFI Board of Trustees....Film director Laslo Benedek (The Wild One, Death of a Salesman) has been named head of graduate studies in the Film and Television Department of New York University....Brian O'Doherty is the new Director of the National Endowment for the Arts' Public Media Program. O'Doherty has been with the NEA for seven years, most recently as Director of its Visual Arts Program. Catherine Wyler has joined NEA as Deputy Director of the Public Media program after managing network relations for Warner Bros. Television.

AVAILABLE FROM AFI: Through the cooperation of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) and AFI, the 1975 International Index to Film Periodicals, published by St. James Press (London), is now available in the U.S. Inquiries on ordering this valuable reference work should be directed to the AFI Archives Department, Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C....AFI's Guide to College Courses in Film and Television lists nearly 800 schools with programs in film and television study. For the next three months, AFI is offering the Guide at a special discount rate of \$3.50 for members and \$4.50 for non-members. See "Editor's Choice" page of this issue for order blank.

The American Film Institute

Washington

George Stevens, Jr., Director; Richard Carlton, Deputy Director; Adrian Borneman, Assistant to the Director; Bruce Neiner, Associate Director for Finance and Administration; Peter Wert, Development Director; Richard Jones, Chief Accountant; Win Sharples, Administrator; Preservation and Documentation; Lawrence Karr, Motion Picture Archivist; Michael Webb, Film

Programming Manager; Larry Klein, AFI Theater Supervisor; Richard Krafus, Executive Editor, The American Film Institute Catalog; Gary Arlen, Public Information Officer; Sam Grogg, Jr., Education Liaison; Winifred Rabbitt, Membership Secretary; Ina Ginsburg, Chairman, Fans of AFI.

Los Angeles

Martin Manulis, Director, AFI-West; Antonio Vellani, Chairman, Senior Faculty; Nina Foch, Senior Faculty; Jan Kadar,

Filmmaker-in-Residence; Jan Haag, Head, Independent Filmmaker Program, Directing Workshop for Women, Academy Internship Program; John Bloch, William Fadiman, Lois Peyser, Writer's Workshop; Christopher Chessner, General Manager; James Powers, Director of Center Publications; Anne G. Schlosser, Librarian, Charles K. Feldman Library; Nancy Peter, Registrar; Jackie Frame, Assistant to the Director, AFI-West; Roman I. Harte, Production Manager; Howard Schwartz, Cinematographer; Vaclav Koudelka, Film Librarian.

utes' was to make a film about the essence of the man, something that gave you a sense of his personality and his character, who he was, and where he came from.

"Jaworski was less interested in promoting the book than in getting some piece of himself across; he was himself aware that very little of his character was known. He worked to have it that way but he's seventy-one, and Watergate is over. He would like people to know that one of the things he did *not* do was come to Washington in order to do a hatchet job on Richard Nixon—he came thinking—hoping—that Nixon was not guilty."

Rather is aware that the broadcasting of the Jaworski profile in the autumn of an election year could be seen as a provocative act, but he does not think that the piece has had much political impact. "It could have had political consequences, but fortunately the piece turns out to be a wash in that sense," Rather says. "Each side gets something—I can hear the Carter people saying among themselves, 'Well, it's good; Jaworski is talking about the Nixon pardon,' and the Ford people can say, 'Well, that's good, because Jaworski says he didn't think there was a deal.'"

Despite the criticism of the "politics" of the Jaworski profile, Rather believes that "Sixty Minutes" is an objective show that does not take editorial stands. "Our style is to flood you with facts and to show you some film that puts you there, and then we let you decide what the inescapable conclusion is," he says. "'Sixty Minutes' is not broadcasting with a set point of view. Where I fall off the wagon is when people say, 'Why don't you take my point of view and run with it?'"

The third correspondent on "Sixty Minutes" is Morley Safer, who replaced Harry Reasoner in 1970 and is now in his sixth season as coeditor of the show. Safer is the maverick among the correspondents. Mike Wallace characterizes him as a "sardonic essayist, a stylist with a wry perception"; and Dan Rather says, "Morley has an excellent nose for a story and a little different way of getting it. If there are four ways of getting a story, Morley can see a fifth; Morley is more thoughtful than either Mike or myself, more reflective."

Safer is more of an observer than a participant in his stories, more often amused than angered by the foibles and follies of his fellow humans. He does interviews well and gets in some investigative reporting, but his beat is usually the offbeat—the problems of dog litter or the merchandising of Tupperware, the Total Woman movement, or the machinations of the mail-order ministry. Morley Safer is a man whose suits rumple and whose tongue stings. Once, during an awards dinner of the Overseas Press Club, Safer put aside the neutral stance that is required of the television journalist on the air and spoke about Agnew's charges of bias in the news media: "Agnew and Richard Kleindeinst and Melvin Laird have done for the truth what the Boston Strangler has done for door-to-door salesmen."

Canadian by birth, Safer has spent years abroad

as a CBS correspondent—he was chief of the London bureau for several years and served two tours as a Vietnam correspondent. Some of his finest pieces for "Sixty Minutes" have been set abroad: on the human cost of war in Israel and Indochina, on the effects of violence in Ireland, and on the whole messy Gulf of Tonkin episode of the Vietnam War.

Safer relishes his role as an essayist and works hard to achieve individuality and point of view in his stories. "I don't particularly enjoy doing interviews," says Safer. "What I look for and enjoy are stories where I have something to say. I enjoy the writing of a piece and a lot of producers don't like that; they like pieces that can be strung together with a series of people talking. I think we do too much of letting the story tell itself through a series of voices. My piece on the Sullair Corporation is an example of a lot of people telling a story. It's kind of a gee-whiz story so, on that kind of a piece, it's better to let them say it than for me to say it."

"But there are times when a piece cries out for a reporter to impose himself, and I can do that a little more than most. An example of that would be the Vietnam essay I did or the piece on Gibraltar. The show on Ireland is really the kind of piece I'm speaking of: Take a powerful statement—the most battered and ruined village in Ireland—and then apply yourself as a reporter. That was truly an essay, and it was very powerful."

Morley Safer believes that his point of view should be implicit in a piece, but that the correspondent should not come forward with an editorial position. "I don't think CBS has gotten more chickenshit on issues; it's just that there is a change in style. On the Representative Sikes thing there was an editorial decision made to lay out this series of very serious charges—you have a Bad Guy and you have evidence. It's the same with Mike's debt collector's piece. But I don't think it's our job to come on at the end and say, 'What this country needs is tough legislation to stop abuses and strong arm tactics by these charlatans.'"

Safer does not like to be interviewed. He often searches for the right word, and many sentences remain unfinished. He is occasionally critical of "Sixty Minutes," but the criticism is always couched in qualifiers and disclaimers. Safer says the show is sometimes too serious—"I think what the show sometimes misses is wit; it's sometimes fairly heavy-handed." Another Safer complaint is the lack of substantive fine arts coverage. "Art pieces we don't do," Safer says. "Don Hewitt has a very cautious eye about doing that sort of piece. What we will do occasionally are people in the arts who have very strong public personalities, like Nureyev or Beverly Sills. When we do movies, it is not as art; rather we do people like Sue Mengers, the agent. I recently wanted to do a piece on Robert



Dan Rather, former CBS White House correspondent, believes in the objectivity of "Sixty Minutes."

Altman that would have been a legitimate arts piece and not just a movie piece, but I met with such a lukewarm response that I gave it up."

Safer, the Thomas Carlyle of "Sixty Minutes," is also not satisfied with the quality of writing on the show. "In the end what you see on TV is so powerful that words are often simply considered a little bit of gilding," Safer says. "I don't think the writing on this show is very good. The show is technically excellent and well edited but the writing is routine; quite often words are just words and not particularly well chosen. We tend to look for the action thing rather than the reporter telling you something. That's a change in style which is not particularly for the better. I think sometimes in our desperate search to be middlebrow we underestimate our audience."

The man who has made his success out of "estimating" that audience is Don Hewitt, the executive producer. He is the driving force behind the show and a man well respected by those with whom he works. Dan Rather says that Hewitt is "a fount of ideas" who would "be a success editing a magazine or a newspaper"; and Mike Wallace calls him a "first-rate editor" with a "remarkable facility for taking a piece of film that is nineteen minutes long and rearranging it and sharpening up your words."

Hewitt is a casual dresser with a New York accent who has trouble sitting still for five minutes at a time. He has been interviewed so many times that he has developed a set routine about the show. Among his favorite and oft-repeated remarks are these: "We take the role of ombudsman for someone who would have no other way of redressing his grievance" and "We walked into the vacuum left by the demise of *Look* and *Life*, so we are to the public what the picture magazines used to be" and "One of the reasons for my success is that I always hire people who are brighter than I am" and "The show is not left, right, or center" and a favorite remark uttered on days when the show is taped, "I'm getting too old for this." Hewitt is fifty-three.

The walls of Hewitt's office are lined with fascinating memorabilia. An honorary award for distin-

guished service in journalism from the University of Missouri hangs next to a photograph of Hewitt standing with Richard Nixon and John Kennedy just prior to the first of their debates for which he was the director. (Legend has it that his first words to the candidates were, "You gentlemen know each other, my name is Don Hewitt.") There is also an autographed color picture of First Lady Betty Ford sent to Hewitt after the Morley Safer interview in which Mrs. Ford was candid in her remarks about how she would react to the news of her daughter, Susan, having an affair. The inscription reads, "One thing seems sure, everyone watches your show. With warm personal regards, Betty Ford."

Hewitt has been with CBS News for twenty-six years. He was Edward R. Murrow's director on "See It Now." ("For years you used to see Murrow and the back of my head," Hewitt quips.) He directed "Douglas Edwards With the News" for fourteen years and was the executive producer of the "CBS Evening News With Walter Cronkite" for the first year of its existence. He has worked on the television coverage of five sets of national political conventions, and produced hour documentaries. In 1969 he won three Emmys—as executive producer of two "CBS Reports" shows, "Hunger in America" and Lord Snowdon's moving account of old age, "Don't Count the Candles," and for his direction of the television coverage of the assassination and burial services of Martin Luther King, Jr.

The years Hewitt spent doing hour documentaries in the mid-sixties seem to have left him in despair of full-length TV documentaries ever finding a mass audience. "After I got off the evening news," Hewitt recalls, "I started doing documentaries and I noticed that *all* documentaries got the same rating and I figured that there were the same documentary freaks out there watching every show but there weren't very many of them. There were a lot of documentaries being padded to an hour, and it occurred to me to cut it down, to go for the highlights where it can be meaningful as well as fast-paced. I thought that if we went multisubject and packaged reality as attractively as Hollywood packaged fiction, we would attract a lot of viewers. You are always dealing with attention span. The idea is to do the shows in a fashion where they are so well filmed and so well told that you keep people riveted to that screen. The trick in TV is to grab the viewer by the throat: Don't let his mind wander and think about what's on the other channel. People see TV with a million distractions so I'm always conscious in a 'Sixty Minutes' piece where the guy's mind can wander and say, 'I'm gonna go get me a beer.' You gotta keep their interest constantly." Hewitt's conversation is interrupted by a phone call. His attention instantly shifts to a production problem about which a decision is quickly needed.

"It's all instinctive," he continues. "I'm the least intellectual person I know. A lot of times I say to a producer, 'I see it and I hear it but I don't feel it in the pit of my stomach.' I don't make decisions intellectually, I make them viscerally; I'm the origi-

nal Smiling Jack of TV—I fly by the seat of my pants. When I get bored, I figure other people will get bored. I have the ability to put myself in the place of the viewer because I have the same short attention span he has.

“When an idea comes in, my first reaction is always, ‘Does anybody care? Is anyone gonna watch this?’ It’s not important in TV what you tell people; it’s only important what they remember of what you told them. If you bombard them with a lot of facts in a dull fashion just to discharge your public duty, you perform no service at all. There is a certain entertainment value to this broadcast, but that doesn’t detract from the fact that America is now better informed. If you can entertain people, you can keep them close to the show and they’ll come back next week. I don’t want to broadcast in a vacuum.” But “Sixty Minutes” is not broadcast in a vacuum. The show is so successful this year that a minute of commercial time sells for sitcom rates of \$75,000. Part of the success comes because Hewitt goes after contemporary social problems.

“It is the responsibility of the news division to create this better informed public by reflecting the times in which we live,” Hewitt says. “I don’t want to live in the past and not take cognizance of the fact that the nation has changed. We live in a time when there is great turmoil in the country, when people are claiming that legislation is not providing what the American Dream promised to provide. This country has ragged edges, and I would hope that we

will find them.

“What ‘Sixty Minutes’ does best is to shine lights in dark corners, and if people are doing something in dark corners they shouldn’t be doing, well all we did was to shine a light. The pronouncement of whether what is happening is good or bad is for someone else to determine. I don’t presume to make those judgments for people out there; I would prefer they were presented with the material to make their own judgments.” Although Hewitt worked with Murrow for a number of years, he believes that his personal journalism would look dated now, “preachy” and “sermonizing.” Hewitt opts instead for the cool, low-keyed style of “Sixty Minutes.”

“A lot of journalists,” Hewitt says, “think they are better than anybody else, that they are the watchdogs of freedom, the sentinels at the gate. I don’t really believe that. A lot of news guys get on my nerves because they think that the only thing in the Constitution is the First Amendment, that those founding fathers went to Philadelphia for only one reason—to protect Dan Schorr.

“One of the things that annoys me is the attitude of a lot of news guys who think they are the elite, who think they know more than anybody else, who have forgotten that it is our job to chronicle the times in which we live and not to set the tone for the times in which *they* live.” ■

Stephen Zito is a contributing editor of *American Film*.

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For information and brochure, please contact:

Center Admissions B, The American Film Institute, 501 Doheny Road, Beverly Hills, Calif. 90210

Telluride

Joel E. Siegel

Festival Report

Paradise is unlikely to impress people who have been to Telluride, Colorado. The restored little mining town is magnificently situated in a glacial valley 9,000 feet up in the San Juan Mountains and surrounded by what the Ute Indians called "the shining hills," 14,000-foot peaks that bathe the town in a soft, reflected glow. Telluride had 5,000 inhabitants in its early 1890s heyday. Today it is populated by less than a thousand ski enthusiasts and "trust funders," young people of independent means, who have been careful not to alter the town's frontier architecture. Apart from a new condominium lodge at the edge of town and a network of ski lifts, today's Telluride is almost indistinguishable from the photographs of eighty years ago. Behind the facades, however, there have been changes; the general stores and bordellos of yesterday are now art galleries and elegant restaurants.

Theater operator and film distributor Bill Pence, prime mover of the Third Telluride Film Festival, tells opening night

audiences that if they fail to hike or take a jeep tour or go horseback riding, they have not really participated in the festival. Spurred on by Pence's advice, "You can't and shouldn't see everything," festival visitors often surprise themselves by going native—hiking to one of the area's spectacular waterfalls, ascending the steep Coonskin ski lift, fishing in trout streams. In fact, Pence has programmed the three-day event so that no individual can possibly see all of the film offerings. A general festival ticket admits holders to only two of the three evening tributes, and, throughout the festival, a variety of films are concurrently screened at three different locations.

The Telluride festival is small, accommodating no more than 300 people, and Pence and codirectors James Card of George Eastman House and Tom Luddy of the Pacific Film Archive, want to keep it that way. There's an intimacy about the Labor Day weekend gathering that quickly turns strangers into gossiping friends. Directors and movie stars mingle freely with the rest of the film buffs in the daily scramble for meals and screenings.

One morning, after a brisk walk (during which I discovered that what I had taken to be shadows of mountain birds were, in fact, the shadows of brightly colored hang gliders lazily circling the valley), I arrived at a health food store to find Julie Christie, tiny, barefoot, and lovely, sitting alone sipping fruit juice. Somehow the physical beauty of Telluride combines with the unfailing graciousness of the townspeople to create an informal yet naturally dignified atmosphere. One wants to behave better there.

Unlike last year, when new films by Werner Herzog and Joan Micklin Silver created sensations, the highlights of the third Telluride festival were the tributes and rediscoveries. Opening night was devoted to the brilliant animations of Chuck Jones. Director Pence painted the lily by alternating Jones cartoons with excerpts from classic Charles Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Harold Lloyd features. The intention was "to place Jones in the

comic tradition," but Jones's work stands up surpassingly well on its own merits. The twelve-cartoon retrospective emphasized the breadth of Jones's expressive range—surrealism (*Duck Amuck*), show biz fables (*One Froggy Evening*), movie parodies (*The Scarlet Pumpernickel*, *Drip-along Daffy*), comic violence (the Road Runner's *Gee Whizz-z-z*), emotional vignettes (*Feed the Kitty*, about a mutt's affection for a kitten), and confections quite beyond category, like *What's Opera Doc?*, which sends up the Ring Cycle and *Fantasia* in six minutes of deliciously witty animation.

The opera house lights came up to reveal Jones jauntily leaning against the proscenium arch, looking for all the world like Bugs Bunny after he has, once again, outwitted Daffy Duck. A man who knows how good he is yet seems unaffected by that knowledge, Jones was obviously delighted by the tribute and offered several instructive demonstrations for the audience, including an imitation of a dog in distress and an illustration of the differences in gesture between a miserly toady like Uriah Heep and an aristocratic penny pincher like Jack Benny. In response to the enthusiastic festival audience and the altitude, he confessed, "This is the happiest I've ever been without breathing."

James Card hosted an early morning rediscovery of several films of Viola Dana, a great star of the teens, and her late, underrated director-husband, Jack Collins. Following excerpts from *The Cossack Whip* (1916) including a protracted and violent sequence with Dana flogging the villain, and *The Girl Without a Soul* (1917) in which Dana plays twin sisters, *Blue Jeans* (1917) was screened in its entirety. A rather conventional turn of the century melodrama, *Blue Jeans* is redeemed by Collins's brisk pacing and poetic images: The timeworn conceits of concealed parenthood and family curses seem fresh again when unaffectedly performed and cleanly staged in natural settings. Following the picture's climax, in which the heroine saves the man she loves from the buzz saw, the stage lights came up on the seventy-nine-year-old Dana looking trim and very beautiful. "You see," she explained, pointing at the darkened screen, "if you're a good girl, you get to live a long time."

A tribute to *King Kong* (the original one) began with screenings of Willis O'Brien's dry runs, including *Dinosaur and the Missing Link* (a 1917 animation for Edison), *The Lost World* (1925, with its brontosaurus snapping London Bridge and gliding down the Thames), and footage from *Creation* (O'Brien's never completed 1931 spectacular). Then Orville Goldner and George Turner, coauthors of the new book, *The Making of King*



Eleanor Boardman and James Murray in King Vidor's *The Crowd*. A tribute to Vidor revealed his command of intimate scenes.

Kong, presented slides of hundreds of *Kong* production photographs, illustrating the combination of scale footage, miniatures, glass shots, painted backings, and matte work responsible for the film's visual magic. It was a sometimes informative but ultimately exhausting presentation, rather like viewing *King Kong* frame by frame. Seven members of the original *Kong* company were present, including Merian C. Cooper's widow (the actress Dorothy Jordan), scenic artist Mario Larrinaga, editor Archie Marshek, special effects man Linwood Dunn, and the woman whose beauty killed the beast, Fay Wray. The program ended with a sparkling 35mm print of *King Kong* itself.

In a program note, James Card asserted that King Vidor, subject of the festival's final tribute, is "America's greatest living director." However, the retrospective program seemed to confirm Andrew Sarris's judgment that Vidor "has created more great moments and fewer great films than any director of his

fervescent Marion Davies, a 1928 Hollywood self-parody which causes one to regret that Vidor made so few comedies in the latter half of his career. The next morning, Vidor spoke eloquently in an open discussion about the problems of working as an artist in an industry which is often only reluctantly an art.

The festival's new films were, generally speaking, disappointing. Jeanne Moreau's directorial debut, *Lumière*, which she wrote and in which she performs, has a wonderful summery opening sequence, featuring a bouquet of stunning actresses luxuriating in the delights of a country house. But too soon *Lumière* disintegrates into an episodic, white telephone picture, the banality of which defeats winning performances by Lucia Bose and Keith Carradine.

It's impossible not to admire Akira Kurosawa's *Dersu Uzala*, but the film is equally difficult to enjoy. Kurosawa's account of the friendship between an old woodsman and an army surveyor is affectingly humane, and the autumnal color scheme—russet, orange, brown—is appropriately elegiac. But the man of nature versus man of science conflict remains very schematic, and the film's pace is relentlessly lethargic, a series of very long, often unjustifiably extended takes. People who have seen the film's original 70mm version with stereophonic sound insist that the sometimes streaky 35mm reduction shown at Telluride unfairly represents Kurosawa's work.

Werner Herzog, whose *Every Man for Himself and God Against All* was a highlight of last year's festival, returned with what was billed as "Werner Herzog's Surprise." The surprise turned out to be the first public screening of his new film, *Heart of Glass*. The director apologized that the answer print shown had not been color-corrected and that, because there had been no time for subtitling, his wife had to provide the English oral translation. *Heart of Glass* is an allegory about the self-destruction of a nineteenth-century society, whose end is predicted by a mountain seer (a character based on an actual Bavarian prophet). The production of ruby glass is the economic and spiritual raison d'être of this society; like Wallace Stevens's jar in Tennessee, it orders the surrounding chaos. When the secret of the ruby glass is lost, reason and order collapse.

Most of Herzog's actors perform under hypnosis, sometimes improvising dialogues based on the director's posthypnotic suggestions. (The resulting dialogue includes lines like, "The disorder of the stars gives me a headache," and "For

twelve years there hasn't been a fire and now I can't find my shoes.") The overall effect is a kind of disembodied ensemble playing, the sense of people too narcotized by custom to recognize impending doom. Visually intoxicating, *Heart of Glass* is sometimes rough going, but I think it is yet another breakthrough for Herzog, another largely successful attempt at making us view human society from an utterly alien perspective.

The festival closed on a rainy Monday with two new films. Robert Downey's *Two Tons of Turquoise to Taos Tonight* is unfinished, so a review isn't fair. Except, perhaps, to say that the director's wife, Elsie, a rubber-faced, zonked-out sprite, finally has an opportunity to show us through her warehouse of comic faces and styles. Barbet Schroeder prefaced the screening of his new film, *Maitresse*, by announcing that "Bulle [Ogier] wants you to know that those aren't her hands."

One's curiosity about this odd introduction was soon satisfied by the picture itself, a strange, sometimes repulsive mixture of romance and graphic sadomasochism. A bungler (Gerard Depardieu) falls in love with a professional sexual sadist (Ogier). Downstairs, amid the leather and chains of her pain parlor, Ogier realizes her clients' punishment fantasies; upstairs, she is subjected to her lover's violent possessiveness. This peculiar love story is frequently interrupted by (and is perhaps only a pretext for) long, documentary sadomasochist rituals, and it all ends with a fairy-tale flourish straight out of Jacques Demy. Schroeder, who has produced some of the most adventurous and artistic French films of the past decade (including Eric Rohmer's moral tales and the long, innovative works of Jean Eustache and Jacques Rivette), has made a confused film which ineffectively strives to reconcile slick professionalism with a voyeuristic obsession with corruption.

One leaves Telluride elated yet unhappy about the programs one necessarily had to miss: Rohmer's new *La Marquise D'O...*, Victor Erice's *The Spirit of the Beehive*, a well-received revival of Louis Malle's 1967 *The Thief of Paris* with Jean-Paul Belmondo, musical documents by Les Blank and Fabiano Canosa, visionary films by Larry Jordan, Paul Sharits, and Stan Brakhage, and William K. Everson's survey of the B-Western. Back home again, where there are no mountains and very few good movies, one is reluctant to praise the Telluride festival too widely. After all, there are only 300 tickets available, and next Labor Day isn't all that far away.

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Sketch of Bugs Bunny. Opening night at Telluride featured twelve of Chuck Jones's finest cartoons.

rank." Again, the program was too long—nearly two hours of excerpts from ten Vidor films, followed by a complete screening of his 1924 *Wild Oranges*. Vidor's later, inimitably delirious pictures like *The Fountainhead*, *Beyond the Forest*, and *Ruby Gentry* (which he now tends to disavow) were not represented, an unfortunate omission of some of his most arresting creations. Long battle sequences from *War and Peace* and *The Big Parade* today seem far less impressive than the more intimate moments of *The Crowd* and *The Jack Knife Man*. The revelation, however, was a long, very funny sequence from *Show People* with the ef-

It began simply, an innocent involvement. Before he realized it, Raphaelson was hooked, and the odd couple became a part of his life.

Sonny, Cher, and Me

Samson Raphaelson

It was idle curiosity on a Sunday evening in late 1973 that made me turn to the Sonny-Cher television show. I had not the faintest idea who Sonny was or what Cher meant. Although my wife and I habitually viewed television during dinner, we stuck to the news, panel discussions, or butterflies over the Amazon and alligators along the Congo. Being grandparents, we enjoyed the privileges of living alone, sole masters of our television dial; and we avoided entertainment, having had our lifetime quota of song, dance, and laugh lines.

I do not mean to imply that we were at peace with the world. Possibly my wife was. She, however, will recede into the background, lively and self-sufficient, as I grope my way through the maze of Sonny, Cher, and myself.

My own state on that Sunday evening was one of compromise with life, a bit on the sepulchral side. The world is a desert to a playwright without a play. (I had quit Hollywood decades ago—Lubitsch was dead; and Hitchcock and I, although our friendship abided, both knew, after *Suspicion*, that we were not meant for each other cinematically. I returned to my true love, the theater.) A desert, indeed; I was trying to recuperate from a series of disasters that had started in the early 1960s, when I had discovered the Generation Gap. I spent a year writing a tragicomedy about it; but even as I was finishing that play, it was becoming obsolete. My villain, for instance, was a thirty-five-year-old high-school teacher, on the verge of seducing the sixteen-year-old daughter of lovable suburban parents. He was a drunkard, an outlandish character who affected a beard. By that time, however, apparently all the male high-school teachers had beards and were seducing all the high-school girls, and alcoholism was out; pot and hash were in. The Gap had shifted elsewhere. I wrote three new plays in the next several years, missing the Gap each time—through effigy lynchings of college deans, love-ins, and mass belly dances to God. Then came *Hair*, and I abandoned American youth.

Indeed, I abandoned my career. My shelves were filled with unread books I had been accumulating for old age,





which was now or never. I was working my way through the opening volume of Sir George Trevelyan's *American Revolution*, when the Six-Day War exploded in the Middle East. Stirred to my soul, I leaped at the opportunity to consecrate myself. My wife and I flew to Israel, where I volunteered my life and/or my services to stage and screen, school and seminar, young and old—gratis: no salary, no percentage of the gross, not even a nominal fee. Five baffling years floated by; the humdrum, self-engrossed natives did not quite seem to understand me. But suddenly, it all came together in an idea for a comedy about a mature American author (I took fifteen years off my age and made him sixty), a Don Quixote offering to die between plays for the residents of the land of his Biblical ancestors. I started writing again.

“To me Cher was a tank-town Cleopatra with a hash-house waitress’s air of ennui.”

I am now returning to Sonny and Cher. The American stock market was diving; we relinquished our suite in the Sharon Hotel in Herzliya, hastening back to our New York apartment with the television set in the dining room. I went on writing, of course, not losing a beat, and then suddenly the Yom Kippur War sneaked up, just when I was in the middle of Act II. The humdrum, self-engrossed natives became, overnight, heroes or martyrs; and the best play of my life became irrelevant, stale, and unprofitable. I laid the one-and-a-half acts on top of all the defunct Generation Gaps, returned to Trevelyan, and one Sunday evening, why not, I tuned in on Sonny and Cher.

In a setting reminiscent of the most deplorable film musicals of the 1930s, against a skyscraper-high background aglitter with stars and Milky Way vapors, accompanied by deafening applause and orchestral flourishes, a couple came toward me in a controlled prance on a mile-long runway and stopped, registering happy helplessness at waves of adulation calling for nothing less than the Second Coming. My eyes passed quickly from Sonny, a grinning little fellow with longish hair and a drooping mustache, to Cher, unobtrusively taller, a languorous, long-limbed brunette. Alongside Sonny’s genuine grin, she smiled a faraway Oriental smile. Thus they stood until Sonny raised his arms, and with stunning promptness the worshippers delivered silence.

I think a song came now. I am vague about the songs; from the first they were all alike—indecipherable words in cahoots with tune-mangling blasts from the orchestra. Anyway, at some point, speech—that is, the jokes—began. Here my mind blurs again: None of the jokes were

bad enough to be memorable. Their design is unforgettable, however. All start with Sonny grinning, trapped into expecting a compliment; Cher, with an enigmatic expression, leads him on; he begs for more; finally, same expression, she says something like, "They didn't know it was your singin' in the rain, Shorty—they thought it was the neighbor's cat in heat," or "You and me on a tropical isle is not a dream, Shrimp; it's a nightmare." The audience swoons in hilarity while Sonny's face takes time out.

That was the joke, no matter what the given words were. Well, after I heard it repeatedly that first evening, I began to feel for the incessantly good-natured little fellow, so innocent of talent and so unaware of it. Every time the bored lady flicked the shopworn arrow into his battered behind, something in me cried out for the dignity of man. I said to myself, "*How long can this go on?*" I was hooked.

Sunday after Sunday I tuned in, waiting, through a lavish monotony of skits, choreographed "numbers," and guest stars, for the little guy to rise, trample the lady into a dust of scenery and costumes, and, grenade in one hand and machine gun in the other, to terrorize the members of the musicians' union until I could discern the words and tune of at least one song.

I became prejudiced against Cher, despite her obvious attractions and possible hidden talents. To me she was a tank-town Cleopatra with a hash-house waitress's air of ennui. Her figure, as I got familiar with every square inch of it, was not fabulous but merely incredible, a wax fashion-dummy in a Fifth Avenue store window. Her solo songs were decibel binges with the orchestra.

I must mention one moment that was different: There

"As for Sonny, he remained invincible in his nonentity and... I began to lose hope."

was a hush; the accompaniment was throttled to an unprecedented murmur; Cher was standing on a set-designer horizon, grandiosely forlorn, nothing but the constellations hanging around. Gone from her face were the routine enigma and the routine faraway smile; there was a semblance of mood. The subject, I gathered, was the doleful aspect of love. Here, at last, came gamut—and welcome, indeed. The lady's face suddenly drooped into the pained expression that used to be the style when everybody was imitating Lena Horne. On Cher it looked as if she were about to render a commercial for the relief of gas. Then, orchestra still cowed, she delivered the amorous lament—belted out, same old finger snapping and shoulder tilting—belted out with belts that would belt any football team to victory. I recall phonetically some scattered phrases:

"Ah-yam woo-woo tew you...sunshahn uv yoor smahle wah-wah...kee-pawn kee-pawn smahlin woo-woo...ah-yam wah-wah woo-woo...." Meanwhile, the camera crept from her face down to her palpitating belly button, which I inspected with awe but could not accept as a saving grace.

As for Sonny, he remained invincible in his nonentity, and, after nine or ten Sundays, I began to lose hope. After all, I had a life of my own and, as a matter of record, I had been living it. Six days each week I had been true to my high resolve. Trevelyan had led me irresistibly into the aura of George Washington—a man of stature inconceivable today. The mystery of the ways in which power sought him out, of how he transcended one clumsily lost battle after another and rose to remain high above men and nations. And Carl Sandburg's fumbling, lonely Abe Lincoln—what a metamorphosis from the stock great-man image I dimly retained from AmHist II in college. Again, a man inconceivable today.

I was about to correct my bad TV taste in letting that couple into our dining room when, passing a newsstand, I saw a streamer headline on a paper I had never heard of before, the *National Star*. I bought a copy and yes, the Sonny-Cher show had been canceled. Millions of my countrymen—I was not the only one—had ceased to care. Oddly enough, I did not like that. It upset me. I glanced through the *Star*, which was crammed with news that my customary *New York Times* had not seen fit to print. They were married, Mr. and Mrs. Bono; he was Italian and about ten years older than she; they lived in a \$2 million Beverly Hills mansion which cost \$100,000 a year to run; Cher was an Armenian-French-Cherokee descendant; she was a high-school dropout, and he was her cultural equal; they had matching Rolls Royces and a girl-child named Chastity.

Well, that was that. I felt for them both now—I included Cher. Still, I thought, they're young, have a roof over their heads and three meals a day; and besides, *how the hell have I fallen into such company?* Anyway, off my dial, out of my life. But then I turned to another page of the *Star* and discovered what the rest of the world apparently had long known—that Sonny had been treated in life as in our Sunday evening dining room, that Cher had broken his heart, had sued for divorce and custody of the child, and had left him all alone in that \$2 million alcazar. Or maybe it was she who stayed, compelling him to slink away in his Rolls Royce.... It came to me in a daze, including bulletins of her hots for a Hollywood boy-millionaire. I returned to the newsstand and found those hots duly celebrated in the cover story of *Time* and similarly featured and mulled over in *Esquire*.

I did not sleep well that night. I laid Abe Lincoln aside while he was in the most harrowing crisis of the Union and brooded on the picayune Sonny all alone in his empty Rolls Royce. I felt very badly about Sonny. Not as the poor-slob image on my television screen, but as the living slob behind the image. It may all have been an obscure side effect of the unkind cut dealt me by the Yom Kippur War; I had no inclination for a psychiatrist at \$50 an hour to ruminate on the matter. Certainly it was out of character for me. There was no clarion call in the travail of this rich little guy: He was not even Jewish.

Respite came in the very next issue of the *Star*, now my Bible. It came like the denouement in an old Jolson movie.

Another network was giving Sonny his great opportunity! A television spot starring himself—himself alone! Prime time, even on Sunday evening! “The Sonny Bono Show!” I was not the only one who cared.

I wanted, for the occasion, to trade our superb black-and-white television for an even more superb color model, but my wife maneuvered me out of it. She shared not my obsession; like any well-mated couple, we did not have too many interests in common. Throughout the rise and fall of the Bonos she was in her bedroom with a small portable set, true to current events or wildlife on other continents.

The newsstands and I lived restlessly through the intervening weeks. Beyond my constant companion, the *Star*—and *Time* and *Esquire*, which I now read diligently—I became familiar with the *National Enquirer* and all the women’s magazines from *Playgirl* to the *Ladies’ Home Journal*; and there was not an hour on the air when I and the millions who stood shoulder to shoulder with me could not get Sonny-Cher insights, analyses, glandular reports, and guru prophecies, or a clause-by-clause legal breakdown of the conditions under which two-year-old Chastity, who had occasionally made a toddling entrance when the hour belonged to Daddy as well as to Mommy, would now be permitted to brighten the hour for Daddy alone.

Came the Sunday; came the evening; came the moment. I forgave the cathedral-like million-watt background and the from-here-to-eternity runway, for I beheld a new Sonny. Costumed in strutting splendor, he strode forth like a matador, raised one arm and stilled the tumult.

Then he spoke. Ladies and gentlemen, he said in effect and in ringing tones, I am free. I am master of my songs, the captain of my jokes. Never again will aspersions be cast on me—physically, mentally, or sexually. I am a man, he said.

I was witnessing a revolution, hearing a declaration of independence. I cheered.

Then one of the guest stars appeared, a girl with fluent legs and an articulate behind—they are a composite to me; let’s call her Tootsy. Sonny gallantly said something like, “You have the longest legs in show business.” She replied, complete with sleepy smile, something like, “And you have the shortest.” The audience screeched its delight while Sonny held the pause; nothing was happening on his face; he had not even learned to look stupid.

I sat in blackness through that unrelenting hour. It was sheer lunacy that such vast technology should be concentrated on the deliberate assassination of one guileless human being. But time marched on. It was a nonstop hell in which a guest star said, “A bunch of us pros watched you rehearsing, Sonny, and I gotta admit you broke us all up.” “Yeah? Which number was it?” “It was when you sang.” Another week, a guest said, “I predict this show will have a long run, Sonny.” “Yeah?” “Yeah. I also predicted there would be no inflation.” Still another time, a guest said, “I always laugh in the face of adversity. Look where I am. Ha, ha, ha!” Even the voice of the announcer, launching the hour, once drawled, “Ladies and gentlemen, tonight’s unfortunate guests will be....”

Through those weeks, the designated corpse moved unwittingly, while I sat numbly through the slow torture of his dying hours. Then one Sunday evening it came to me that I had been missing something. I had been hearing, yet

“...I beheld a new Sonny. Costumed in strutting splendor, he strode forth like a matador...”

not hearing, the clear, continuous, unsubtle beat of yearning. I caught words of a maudlin song: “No one knew but her and I/ We had already said good-bye/ I’ll take my bows; who am I to cry?” Another time, he said or sang, “Inside my mind you’re always here by my side.” At least two times per show, behind that unfailing grin, he had been reporting his undying love. He was addressing Cher. *He still loved her!* I cannot say that it made him a Dante to her Beatrice. In fact, it was little to my taste; I am one of the few admirers of Jolson who did not love “Mammy.” But I am obliged to state that when I caught the full impact of Sonny’s hankering, I hankered right with him, and the craftsman in me came alive.

Incidentally, I had not been entirely numb during the preceding weeks. In fact, right after the nightmare premiere, I had rushed to the typewriter, determined then and there to rewrite the whole damn show—to take apart the very stuff I had just endured and rebuild it with style and sparkle. I had never descended to the level of skits and gags before, but most of my work for stage and screen had been comedy; how could I miss? I gave myself a week in which to dash off two or three sample programs. Then I would fly to California, hand them over to those assassins as a gift—free: no charge, no percentage or residuals, not even my traveling expenses—and be the salvation of this nincompoop whose talent was that I happened to give a damn what happened to him. Well, it did not quite work out. I discovered almost at once that skits and gags were not among my gifts. One is never too old to learn.

But this time it was different. I visualized Sonny yearning in a spotlight, and suddenly there is a commotion, a stir, and before the eyes of the piddling few millions of his expiring public, Cher breaks in: No makeup, no beads, bangles, or belly button, this is the Cher out of the long ago. The following exchange takes place:

Cher: Sonny, I can’t stand it no more! Forgive me! Take me back!

Sonny: (drying her eyes with his handkerchief) You really mean it?

Cher: Mean it? You ain’t heard nothin’ yet.

Sonny: I ain’t?

Cher: Sonny, them lover-boys was just a blessing in disguise, know what I mean?

Sonny: They were?

Cher: You said a mouthful. Sex ain’t everything, believe me.

Sonny: It ain’t?

Cher: And outside of the boudoir, they're what you might call shallow—I'd even say uncouth.

Sonny: No kiddin'!

Cher: Money ain't everything, neither, and besides, we still got a couple a million, and that ain't nothin' to be ashamed of. I don't care what the neighbors say.

Sonny: You don't?

Cher: Listen, Sonny, I've been reading about us in the papers, and I got a hunch that we need what they call the benefits of a high-school education.

Sonny: We do?

Cher: So here's my proposition: Let's get remarried, go back and finish high school, then get to be collegians, and then we can talk to people like Peter Bogdanovich and...

Sonny: College—at my age?

Cher: Why not? You want Chastity to grow up with ungrammatical parents? *Please*, Sonny-boy!

Sonny: (thoughtfully) Well, let's think it over. I'm open-minded. Why don't we discuss it with our agent?

Cher: Wonderful!

And, arm in arm, they walk off the screen.

The above is a rough first draft, of course; and it's not in my usual style. But, even so, can't you imagine the next day's headlines in every paper but the *Times*? And the *Star*, of course, would devote a whole issue to this extraordinary intrusion of real life into the about-to-be-entombed "Sonny Bono Show." I am sure it is clear that the little scene that crossed my mind was no idle fancy but the deep-rooted beginning of a television program of infinite possibilities. The world, agog after the remarriage of Sonny and Cher, which I was at once positive the world had been craving, would be on tenterhooks about what happens next. I had stumbled on ideal material: a simple story of the real lives of Sonny and Cher. The high jinks of those real lives had been drip, drip, dripping over me until my work table was mountainous with the sheer essence of the early 1970s, as American as apple pie, juvenile delinquency, or wife swapping.

Here was true inspiration, and on a dramatist's level. In fact, I would be pioneering a new form. Farewell, Stage and Screen. Hail, Television.... Listen, Sonny, I murmured; and hear ye, Cher and Chastity and all ye huddled masses of lovers, lawyers, choreographers, composers, composers' agents, producers, and other millionaires: I have been ordained to present to mankind, week after week, in Technicolor, the first great soap opera of the century—the never-ending drama of that garish and fatuous phenomenon, your collective presence on earth!

I pored over the material on my work table with rapture. Here are a few tidbits:

Cher, introducing her boy-millionaire: "Look, I've traded one short, ugly man for another."

The boy-millionaire, describing his earlier boyhood, when his mother had a corset shop in a room of their apartment: "Home was full of women with big tits."

The faithful Sonny, on the subject of the adolescence that Cher somehow had bypassed: "She sang her ass off and suddenly she was a big girl."

Cher, to an admirer: "Feel my ass; it's hard as a rock." Sonny, itemizing Cher's way of compensating for her

*Samson
Raphaelson*



misguided teenage years: "\$6,000 a month on clothes, \$800 on finger nails, \$900 on a psychiatrist," adding, when informed that the court had ordered him to give her an allowance of \$25,000 a week and that he was permitted to see Chastity only on weekends: "But I love her dearly."

Cher, at the height of her first liaison: "My darling is gonna buy me a condominium—the only thing I missed out on from Sonny."

Chastity, when asked what Mama's paramour called her: "Chastity—what do you think?" How did she feel about her new, er, relative? "He talks loud on the phone."

Cher, on the subject of her sexual relations: "I'm strictly antipromiscuous. With me it's one man at a time. To put it in the vernacular, I'm not an easy lay."

Cher, about her childhood: "I was just a dreamy kid. My big idea was I should be a cute little angel going around curing polio. When Dr. Salk beat me to it, I was absolutely pissed off."

I had not kidded myself, of course, that my cast of characters could appear before cameras every Sunday evening and ad-lib the current aspect of their new romance, the condition of their hearts, livers, finances, or the inflections of their souls. It would have to *seem* that way. That is where I would come in—a seasoned craftsman who could lift form out of the formless flow of actuality and mold the shrill scramble for happiness into mass entertainment, at the same time pillorying these clowns for posterity. In other words, once they had remarried, I as writer and they as actors would make a continuous work of art from the wretched and gaudy material of their daily lives.

I may as well get to the point and confess that this was another of the occasions in which my dreams did not come true. Again I refuse to take the easy way and blame it on myself—old age, waning powers, the hand that keeps



typing long after the brain is senile. Mistakes in practical matters—yes, sometimes. I am not the executive type. But I am in full possession of my faculties and, being a writer and not an executive, I am herewith making a painstaking effort, black on white, to disentangle the subsequent happenings, inside and outside me.

In the first place, if I had been the executive type, I should have flown to Beverly Hills and persuaded Sonny and Cher to rewed—what is known in all film classrooms as the obligatory scene. I mean, I could not have them *act* a reunion and a remarriage on the screen while, in life, Cher had found another lover or even another husband. Or while Sonny had chosen for serious adoration a handsome creature who resembled a maharani—or she had chosen him, as the case might be.

Well, I ignored all that and wrote three romantic installments—workmanlike jobs. That was my end of it; I admit I was vague about theirs.

Then, all of a sudden, “The Sonny Bono Show” was canceled. There was nobody to write for. That was a vagary of the gods, for which I refuse to take responsibility.

I do admit that I made a misjudgment when I thought I could be a joke writer. But I did have the courage to recognize my error and to abandon the enterprise after less than twenty-four hours of belly-laugh labor.

As for the three romantic episodes, I had merely paused, not quit. I was simply waiting for fate to collaborate, which is legitimate. Meanwhile, their lives were heralded by the hour, day, week, and month. My work table began staggering under living detail, minute or momentous.

Items galore: Boswell-like data on Sonny, Cher, and Chastity and also on Cher’s mother—what a treasure trove of material effused from that lady! Also on a certain psychiatrist. Cher and one of her lovers—offhand, I do not recall which—shared the same psychiatrist, and that had

some interesting results, like liberating her lover from his id so that he could buy nearly \$2,000 worth of custom boots in one spirited moment. This deepening acquaintance with the Sonny-Cher folkways amounted, finally, to a revelation. Their personalities changed. Sonny was no longer just a likable little guy with a high-school-junior face. He really knew a thing or two; had brought Cher from puberty into, as I had to concede, fame and fortune. And Cher had certain talents, which I had known from the first but had been unwilling to see because...well, in certain ways I am a snob. I’m working on it, though; there is still time for change.

Anyway, these were not images any more—images I could inveigh against or root for, abolish or enthrone. They were the unfortunate human race; they were me. And I rarely know, really, what I think of myself, so I did not know, really, what I thought of them. But since they were part of me, I also could not judge them any longer even on the screen.

And there were developments on the screen. Cher blazed forth in *her* own show. I saw her glittering entrance, but I heard the panic under the slick modesty of her words: “Ah’m twenny-eight; weigh one-o-six; mah future is in yoor hands.” The *Star* streamlined that she was a soaring success, but weeks later, I heard her melancholy, “Thank yew, folks. Mah second biggest hope is yew’ll be heah next week. Mah first is that ah’ll be heah, tew.” Soon she, too, went off into oblivion. Then, suddenly, they were together. She had her offstage husband and coming baby, and he had his royal Hindu lady; but in my dining room they were pleasantly, easily, relievedly together again.

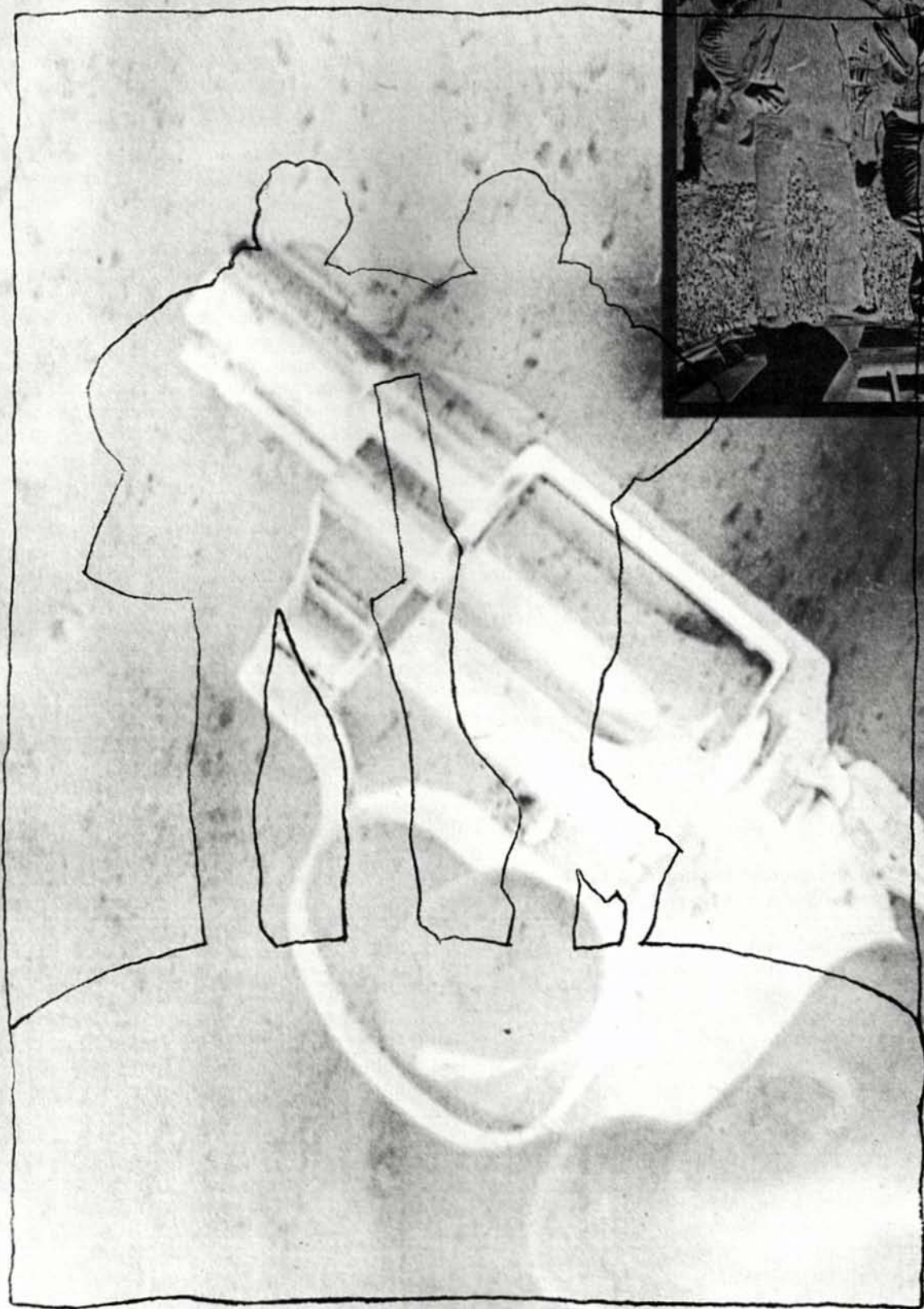
Possibly I’ve lost track of what I started to say, except that I am saving Cher and Sonny to write about some day. They are not being wasted. In the meantime, I’ve become quite comfortable with them: neither up with their joys nor down with their woes. I expect to view them quite frequently in their new program this fall, which is heralded as sexy. The fact that she will be going through the motions of carnality with Sonny when she is remarried and the mother of a second child will offend me no more than it will any other Sonny and Cher well-wisher.

If pressed, I would sum up by saying that I feel pleasantly sorry for these poor, ignorant victims of fame, fortune, greed, bad management, and democracy—as pleasantly sorry as I feel for myself.

Perhaps a mite more sorry for them when I recall the last time I tuned in on their reunited show. I think I caught a glimpse of Chastity, now aged five, always charming. Then there were only Sonny and Cher, and I heard him saying, “Gilbert O’Sullivan—that’s a colorful name. Maybe I should change mine.” Cher said, “How about Tom O’Thumb?” Sonny grinned broadly; they were friends now, you see.

I have finished James Froude’s enthralling *Elizabeth I* and am deep in his *Henry VIII*. However, I never miss the *Star*, the *Enquirer*, or any other flowers of the newsstand.
—New York, September 1976 ■

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The Backlash Factor

Reflections on Televised Violence

Robert Sklar

It's ten o'clock, and I'm circumnavigating the channels. "Charlie's Angels," an adventure series, on ABC. "The Blue Knight" on CBS. "The Quest," a Western, on NBC. A split-second evaluation of images and I settle on "The Blue Knight"—a glimpse of smog-shrouded L.A. City Hall has plucked a personal chord. There's a slow bit of business with a cop and a panhandler who wipes windshields and then suddenly it's night. The cutting tempo quickens, jazz on the sound track, a man in an expensive station wagon hails a streetwalker, they gesture and leer, she gets in the car, another man sneaks in the backseat, holds a gun to the driver's head, they drive off, the driver has his own gun, a shot, a crash, screams. It's ten past ten, and crudely, without characterization or subtlety or explanation, a man is dead.

This is a random moment of dramatized violent death on television—one of several dozen every week, a hundred in a month, more than a thousand by the year. It's not typical, there are "worse" and "better" depictions, more or less bloody, cruel, senseless, shocking, but it's symptomatic in the one-dimensional nature of victims and victimizers, their motives, gestures, expressions, and the almost joyful energy of the music and the editing, on a show which is otherwise visually plain and slow.

No more controversial issue bedevils American television than the question of what to do about violent scenes like this. Do they actually stimulate some impressionable young people and adults to commit similar acts of violence? Do they convey an unrealistic impression of the omnipresence of violence in American society, encouraging anxiety and fearful behavior quite at variance with actual social circumstances? Or are they merely a necessary and time-honored convention of storytelling, less gruesome by far than Homer, reaching audiences that in other periods thrilled to B-movies, pulp detective stories, dime novels, or thronged to bearbaitings and public hangings?

These are old questions, subjects already of several thousand research reports and countless editorials and irate letters to network presidents. But during the Bicentennial year—perhaps because of it—they have acquired fresh vigor. In the year of national self-congratulation and patriotic good spir-

its, violence on television seemed to many a particularly unwarranted affront to American pride and social character. From a leading advertising agency came a startling presentation highlighting the excesses of violence (and sex) in the media. A corporation took a public stand disassociating itself from "programs, publications, movies, or events involving excessive violence, sex, or matters of poor taste." The national Parent-Teachers Association announced a campaign against violence on television. A new wind seemed to be stirring some last straws.



Violence on television: You can abhor it emotionally, deplore it morally, condemn its failures in aesthetic terms and even as story, but there is one blunt truth no one should avoid—television, and other popular media before it, have consistently dealt more openly with the realities of violence in American society than the universities and schools, the churches, politicians, and most of the press. This fact accounts for no small part of the persistent effort to censor and control all major media in their turn, movies once, comic books once, television now. Anything which depicts American society other than as humane, well-ordered, gentle, kindly, moral, benign, and just should not be communicated—opposition to violence on television often follows from a premise as simple as that. Norman Mailer recently suggested that half of America lives in the nineteenth century and half in the twentieth, and the attack on television violence has in considerable part the character of a nineteenth-century grudge against the twentieth for being born.

This makes it inordinately difficult for twentieth-century critics of violence on television to find common ground with the moralists whose roots lie in another era. They are forced to take a civil libertarian stand, deploring the message while defending to the death the messenger's right to say it, and wondering all the while whether commercial television producers and powerful networks deserve such ringing declarations of principle. Or

"A few small gestures in the supermarket. . . could have a snowballing effect that alters television content. . ."

they can revert to a more businesslike attitude, conceding that since principle no less than art and story is so difficult to define and implement in the mass media context, it works more effectively to judge such issues, as William James said in his essays on pragmatism, by their "cash value."

The J. Walter Thompson advertising agency has taken the latter tack in its unprecedented multimedia presentation called "The Desensitization of America." This forty-minute montage-collage of images and sounds from popular music, books, magazines, films, television, and urban smut districts was intended principally for in-house use by JWT's staff and clients, but the extraordinary response it evoked among advertising and media professionals, as well as interest generated among the public by press accounts, has led to considerable notoriety and wider dissemination. The notoriety is likely to increase as JWT makes available the results of its national survey of adult TV viewers' attitudes toward violence.

The preliminary findings, reported by Ron Sherman, manager of JWT's New York office, at a staff screening of "The Desensitization of America" (to employees who had seen the presentation as many as three or four times before), are already rippling ominously through the media world. A full forty percent, two out of every five respondents, said they avoid watching television programs they consider too violent. Twenty percent of the men and one-third of the women said they prevent children

from watching such programs. And then comes the pragmatic kicker. One out of every ten respondents has contemplated boycotting products advertised on programs he or she considers excessively violent, and fully eight percent said they had actually refused to buy the products advertised on the disapproved of shows. (When JWT released its results at a national meeting of advertisers, this figure was revised downward considerably.)

A potential eight percent loss of sales just by placing one's commercials on an offending program! No wonder JWT is concerned, and wants its clients alerted, too. "We are not leading the charge against TV violence," says Sherman. "We are just leading the investigation." But with data like that it's hard to tell where investigation leaves off and condemnation begins. No advertising agency wants to place its clients' products in a programming environment that could actually turn off sales. A few small gestures in the supermarket—taking one brand of canned tuna instead of another which advertises on disapproved of programs—could have a snowballing effect that alters television content more swiftly than any other form of protest.

The public is never wrong, said the movie mogul, Adolph Zukor. Don't get any illusions about your infallibility, but consider that your power, even in this age of mammoth media, may be greater than you think. It consists almost wholly in abstention. You may exhort, explain, persuade, legislate, and get nowhere. Stay away, and your absence will be

David Soul and Michael Glaser of "Starsky and Hutch," a top-rated show which has drawn criticism for its violence.

"Serpico," with David Birney as a cop who jogs through Central Park in a Mostly Mozart sweatshirt.



heard. It is a negative power, but power nonetheless. A few months ago Les Brown was writing in the *New York Times* that television had become a failure-proof business—the networks had to turn away advertisers because all their time slots were sold out months in advance of the new season. A little consumer resistance could turn the most iron-clad media dictum into a cloud of smoke.

No one else dies on "The Blue Knight" this particular evening. Pausing at 10:15 for three commercials, at 10:30 for three more, plus two network promotions, a local news promotion, and a public service ad, at 10:45 for another three commercials, at 10:54 for yet three more, and ending, just before the final logo, with a paid political ad, the program devotes its remaining time to tracking down the victim's killer. The only substantial violence thereafter is verbal—criminal types calling the cops "pigs." When the cop-on-the-beat chases the fleeing murder suspect, he doesn't pull a gun, he outruns the kid and collars him. A bit of fantasy to leaven the Boyle Heights realism.

Dramatic tension comes not so much from the chase as from what might be called caste conflict within the law enforcement world. The cop-on-the-beat argues with detectives and with the district attorney about their willingness to frame the panhandler for murder: "The legal system—let's not go into that," says the DA. The detectives are upstaged by the FBI on a robbery bust that helps finger the killer: "You know the Feds—we do the work, they take the credit." Resentment against higher authority, and a sense of powerlessness to do anything about it, pervade the story.

The program ends on a pair of bitter ironies. The panhandler, saved from a murder rap by the cop-on-the-beat, turns on his benefactor, because a public defender has told him the cop failed to inform him of his rights. And the murderer, who can't be tried on the crime he did commit because of insufficient evidence, will be framed on a federal robbery charge, of which he's innocent, because of a coincidence that provides evidence enough to convict. "The Blue Knight" depicts a chaotic, disordered, irrational system of justice, in which right triumphs barely, and by ambiguous means. If I were a moralist, I'd want to pay as much attention to the tone, the ambience, the ideology, if you will, of programs like "The Blue Knight," as to a few seconds of exciting violence.

Which brings up the question of moral discrimination. How do you decide when violence crosses the line from "just right" to "too much"? What religious, ethical, social, aesthetic, and commercial judgments do you bring to bear? Seventy-five years of complaints against movies have demonstrated no consensus among the moral-

ists. Many wanted to eliminate all crime and sex from films; but without crime and sex as subjects, said Martin Quigley, one of the authors of the Motion Picture Production Code, there wouldn't be any popular entertainment. He wanted to preserve those subjects for the movies, but to ensure that criminals and sexual transgressors were made to pay.

So there's also the issue of context. Certain episodes, possibly offensive or provocative in isolation, may exert a positive moral influence when viewed within the *mise-en-scène* of an entire work. J. Walter Thompson's multimedia presentation ignores this aspect of the debate. It shows, for example, one after another, the three most sexually explicit scenes from the motion picture *Shampoo*, and they appear shocking and palpably unpleasant. Yet one could make a convincing case for the artistic quality of that film, for the value of those scenes in context, and for an interpretation of the film quite different from the implication JWT conveys through its excerpts.

Despite the enormous and as yet unexamined complexity of these issues, the JWT presentation has impelled one of its clients, the Samsonite Corporation of Denver, manufacturer of luggage and outdoor furniture, publicly to draw the line against placing its ads in unacceptable programs. On the forbidden list are "programs, publications, movies, or events involving excessive violence, sex, or matters of poor taste," as well as those media entertainments "whose story line is known to involve sex, violence, shock, regardless of the degree of editing."

Peter R. VanDerNoot, Samsonite's director of public relations, seems to play down the novelty of the corporation's policy statement when I speak with him about it. "That's the kind of company we are," he says. The statement is a "reaffirmation of



George Kennedy with Sheila Larken in "The Blue Knight," which often depicted an irrational, chaotic justice system.

Peter Falk questions suspect Patrick McGoochan in "Columbo," a detective series that turns more on characterization than action.



our way of doing business." Nevertheless, a press release accompanying the document describes it as announcing "new criteria" for placement of its ads, and the formal statement concludes:

"By establishing this policy, it is our hope that the communications and entertainment media will give positive attention to the reduction of violence, and other elements in poor taste, in the development of future media presentations."

I ask VanDerNoot for examples of programs that do not meet his company's standards, and of others that do. He offers "Starsky and Hutch" as a program that deals excessively with violence, "Columbo" as one dealing "with the same type of material but not excessively violently." A corporation thus showed itself willing to take a specific stand on questions of taste and morality. The specific grounds for that specific stand, however, remain unexplained.

Ten o'clock again. Neither "Starsky and Hutch" nor "Columbo" are available for comparative purposes, so I give the new NBC series, "Serpico," a try. It has similar blood lines to "The Blue Knight," sired by a best-selling book out of a feature movie, but it's soon clear the differences between the two shows are as sharp as the contrast between East Los Angeles and Upper East Side New York. "The Blue Knight" is a blue-collar cop; Frank Serpico jogs in Central Park in a Mostly Mozart sweatshirt.

They hold back the first death in "Serpico" until 10:20. By that time the victim has been seen several times, neither he nor his murderers are perfect strangers. His executioners march him down an alley and turn into a narrow stairway between two buildings. The camera suddenly withdraws. You can feel the panning movement almost physically, an averting of the eyes. Bloodcurdling screams on the sound track, on the screen a blank brick wall. Then a slow, almost reluctant dolly up to the stairway, a glimpse of a corpse, sprawled head down on the step. Cut to a commercial for pizza.

Here we have a new definition of camera-shy—it's the shy camera. Can this diffidence be a product of the pressures on producers and networks exemplified by the JWT presentation, the Samsonite statement, and more diffused public protest? It doesn't deter "Serpico" from further violence—three more deaths, by my count.

It's a good thing Serpico has been jogging in the park in his Mostly Mozart sweatshirt. He's been set up to be bumped off by the numbers racket. The hitmen are waiting for him on the sixth floor of an

office building, but he does a smart thing. He presses the elevator button for six, darts out before the door closes, and dashes up the stairs as swiftly as the elevator rises. No sooner do the hoods discover they're blamming away at an empty elevator than Serpico appears in the stairway behind them, gun in hand, ordering them to freeze. They shoot, he blasts one, the other runs. Rather than shooting at the fleeing figure, the hip cop runs after him, catches up, fights, and knocks him out. Cut to an ad for sanitary napkins.

Almost the same circumstances recur in the program's climax—an ambush, an exchange of shots, two fatalities, one bad guy running, Serpico disdaining to fire, overtaking him, punching him out. Was the real-life prototype for this hero an Olympic-class sprinter? No matter. I only hope these depictions of police behavior in "The Blue Knight" and "Serpico" don't encourage youths to turn and flee when some law officer yells, "Freeze!"

"Serpico" has its roots in Hollywood's old B-thrillers and pre-Peckinpah Westerns: no blood, no gore, plenty of gunplay and fistfights, clean deaths without visible wounds and lots of time for final statements by the dying before their eyes shut and heads fall limp. These conventions bring to mind another of the classic conundrums of the violence debate: Does this old-fashioned, purified depiction of violence affect audiences any differently than more explicit violence?

A brief wire service item in the paper begins: "The Parent-Teachers Association plans a year-long campaign against violence on television that could include national boycotts of products and programs." This leads me to call Carol Kimmel, national president of the PTA, whom I find at

home in Rock Island, Illinois, fortuitously, following a week-long seminar in Chicago for the ten members of her organization's special commission on television violence. They had heard academic experts, network representatives, people from advertising agencies (including J. Walter Thompson), an FCC commissioner, leaders of Action for Children's Television and the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, two groups leading the campaign against violence on television. Opinions, of course, conflicted.

The PTA is no Johnny-come-lately to the debate over media violence. "We have been concerned with what's happening on the media, oh, since the days of silent pictures," says Kimmel, with a short laugh at the long struggle her words suggest. With that background the PTA might qualify as one of the most persistent voices of nineteenth-century moralism in the land. When it comes down to specifics, however, such labels seem less useful—they help to clarify the nature of cultural conflicts, but they rarely do justice to the complex aims of the combatants.

The obvious goal of the PTA is to reduce the amount of violence on television; from another angle, that means supporting "good" programs, and the even more difficult task of trying to envision what a desirable daily television diet might be. Another goal is to get the public to take more responsibility for the content of television programs; but the opposite side of that coin is less clear if it means taking away some of the networks' power over programming.

Getting someone, anyone, to take responsibility for media power is like forcing him or her to hold the proverbial hot potato. The networks only want to please the vast majority; the advertisers and their agencies only want to get their message across. They all credit the public with make-or-break power over television content. If not enough viewers like a program, out it goes! But this familiar stance completely ignores the fact that the public can only endorse or reject, it has no access to the process of planning, conception, creation. Curiously, when the networks invoke the myth of the powerful viewer, they invite the disgruntled to take extreme remedies—if you don't like what you see, it's no good complaining, turn off the set. They're betting on the belief that most people would rather watch something than nothing.

Implicit in the PTA's campaign is the conviction that if such an indiscriminate need for television ever existed among the American public, that yearning may be coming under stricter control. The organization cites survey research which indicates that nearly two-thirds of adult respondents hold the view that there's too much violence on television. When confronted with evidence that ratings for violent programs remain high—seeming proof that viewers will swallow their dislike and keep their sets turned on—the PTA suggests a simple answer: pollsters speak to adults while children watch the shows.

"When the networks flood the screen with documentaries on African wildlife, you will know the reformers have won."

It seems clear that the PTA is prepared to encourage its constituents to take the step the networks seem to condone: If you don't like it, don't watch it, and don't let the kids go near it, either. A boycott of products advertised on these offending programs is not ruled out, but it's a much more controversial step, and further down the road. "We are talking about a tremendous industry money-wise . . .," says Carol Kimmel, leaving the sentence dangling, with the possibilities a little too disturbing to voice. But a boycott of programs may be as effective as a boycott of products, though it may take longer to make itself felt.

Reformers are often too preoccupied with attacking what they don't like, to think about what they would do if they succeeded. What would you put on the air if the power were yours? Kimmel answers that she wants more variety in television programs, more moderation, "more realistic treatment about the country." When the networks flood the screen with documentaries on African wildlife, you will know the reformers have won.

Moralists rarely want to change the status quo, they simply want to trim its rougher edges. There is an instructive precedent in the movie field. In the early 1930s the Roman Catholic Legion of Decency organized to boycott offensive movies, and were joined by scores of Protestant and Jewish groups. Hollywood capitulated, the Motion Picture Production Code severely restricted movie depiction of sex and violence. The outcome was that the movie industry for a time grew wealthier and more powerful than ever.

The precedent is only a tenuous one. Television has no antagonist as well organized as the Legion, no leader like the movies' Will H. Hays, no coherent code waiting to be enforced, as the movies did, no economic crisis like the Great Depression to weaken its position. But it does have federal regulation, and a great deal of new technological possibilities not yet fully explored. The capacity exists for many more sweeping changes than occurred in the movies; the current deployment of forces suggests there may be much less. But stay tuned.

NBC has scheduled a three-hour prime-time special for the first fortnight of the new year on violence in America. Will it attempt to clarify the issues raised by violence on television entertainment programs? Don't bet on it. It's more likely to explore exhaustively the implications for Americans of violence among African wildlife. ■

Robert Sklar, the author of *Movie-Made America*, is at work on a study of television and society.

When I started teaching film eight years ago, articles and workshops on the use of feature films in high school were as much a part of teachers' lives as student protests. The bloom has long since disappeared from both the protests and the movement for film study in high schools. Yet questions still persist today about what happened to an idea whose time seemed to have come.

The obvious villain is the economy. When it sagged, so did the federal funds for education. There are less obvious villains: a call for a return to "basics," a move motivated as much by economic concerns as by a desire to bring back a structured education; the lethargy of the seventies—film study, after all, requires time, energy, and much enthusiasm.

But the truth is that film study in high schools hasn't really disappeared. It's just become less strident an issue. If film study in high schools is inconspicuous, it's because it's become so amorphous, reflecting various interests and approaches and special needs. For many, films in school may still evoke memories of dull science class movies or "health" cartoons in Phys. Ed. when it rained. Those films are still there, but now history classes with "Film and Society" units screen movies like *Gold Diggers of 1935* or *I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang*. Films are now a staple of English elective programs, and language classes routinely screen foreign films. The school library is now called a Media Center.

Yet film study itself remains a bit suspect to the outsider. No one ever asks how I teach English or suggests books for students to read. But I am often told how film should be taught and what "great" films adolescents "need" to see—a list which always seems to include the most overemphatic and sententious films made in the last twenty years, such as *David and Lisa*, *The Pawnbroker*, and *The Swimmer*.

I've found that my best response to the skeptics is simply to describe the course I teach. It covers a full school year, comfortably divided into nine-week quarters. But the school day is still six fifty-minute periods, which means feature films must be serialized, not quite the way films were made to be seen.

The first quarter of my course covers film terms, some basics of film theory (yes, high schoolers are introduced to the jargon of montage and mise-en-scène), critical approaches to film, a comparative

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study of film and literature, and an overview of the silent era. I realize this is a lot of film information, but students at the beginning of a school year are so eager and energetic that they handle this heavy work load with relative ease. The demanding schedule, filled with films, lectures, and assignments, challenges those who expected to sit back and have movies "wash over" them. More than a few, though, transfer out of the class to other electives. The film class makeup varies from a few who are ready to debate the merits of Fritz Lang's American films against his German ones to those who announce that they hope we'll be seeing some "heavy flicks" with messages, like *200 Motels* and *Getting Straight*.

At the start, I show snappy shorts and lots of commercials, good examples of film technique at its most frenetic. The first feature is *Citizen Kane*, clearly not an inspired choice, but, nonetheless, perfect for showing what films can and cannot do. With its flamboyantly excessive protagonist and its flamboyantly excessive style, *Kane* shows vividly how form can relate to content.

After *Kane*, I show a feature which illustrates a special approach to editing. Film educator friends have scolded me for showing only excerpts from Sergei Eisenstein's films, but I can't bring much enthusiasm or interest to extended stretches of his emphatic editing style. For the last three years *Petulia*, Richard Lester's 1968 film about pain and the sources of violence, has been my choice. It's another chance to show how form and

content relate; *Petulia* is about broken, shattered lives and is told in a broken, shattered style that requires the viewer to piece together the parts of the story.

The film-literature comparison is a setup on my part, since I try to schedule a film which compares well with its literary source. *Night of the Hunter*, *Fahrenheit 451*, and *Walkabout* are among the features I've used. I can think of few more odious activities than having to read scholarly analyses of how particular movies vary from their literary source. The real emphasis of my short comparative view is on how differently we experience films from the way we experience books. (High-school students always come up with sparkling insights like, "You can't take a movie with you to the bathroom.")

The silent films don't meet with unanimous enthusiasm, but Georges Méliès and Louis Feuillade are unqualified successes. I try to have some appropriate musical background, and there are always questions about the music when a movement from an Ives or a Mahler symphony is used as accompaniment.

Although I keep reading that Griffith proves troublesome for modern, "right on" students, *The Birth of a Nation* is surprisingly popular; it's one of the few films that may actually gain something by serialization. The racism is so blatant and outrageous that it isn't necessary to spend much time on it. Moreover, there's always a student who points out that our recent good "liberal" films are more pernicious in their own way. As one student put it several years ago, "It's all right for Sidney [Poitier] to get the white girl as long as she's cute and stupid and he's a contender for the Nobel Prize."

Silent comedies end the quarter, and the class sees films of Charles Chaplin, Harry Langdon, and Buster Keaton. Here I exercise some restraint in imposing my own tastes; I do resist the temptation to show only Keaton films and to drop the ones of the other clowns.

Next is a series of genre studies: horror, science fiction, the Western, the musical, and film noir, which is essentially a style rather than a genre. One of the reasons that moviegoing in the seventies has turned into such a grim experience is the absence of those satisfying, crisp genre films we watched in the forties and fifties. These films prove something of a revelation to students who are unfamiliar with the clichés and stereotypes (or archetypes, if you prefer) of the movies that

Robert Mitchum in *The Night of the Hunter*, useful in comparative studies of film and literature.

helped my generation through adolescence and lesser traumas.

The only genre which proves downright difficult is the musical; its conventions are almost completely foreign to the young, who, sadly, find it laughable that deeply felt emotion can be expressed through song and dance. The real surprise has been students' enthusiasm for "traditional" Westerns. There are always groans when I announce we'll be spending more than two weeks on Westerns, but the students' aversion is a result of having little exposure to the genre's variety, except for revisionist Westerns and "anti-Westerns." It's no wonder they find films like *My Darling Clementine*, *Red River*, and *Ride the High Country* so pleasing. *The Searchers*, which brought out the most churlish comments only a few years ago, is now actively and intelligently discussed.

The third quarter of my course is devoted to the study of directors with a slight bow to the auteur theory. I try to inform students of my biases so they can make some allowances for my personal tastes and can be aware when they're being proselytized. One of the advantages of teaching film is that since it is such a young art, there is no agreement on the "official" great works. But I do let my students know that many film teachers would find it heretical that we do not see films by Kubrick, Fellini, Altman, three directors whose works I find unappealing. (All it takes is such a profane pronouncement from a minor authority like a high-school film teacher, and the students, who only weeks before didn't know films had directors, take the first opportunity to see *Barry Lyndon*, *Amarcord*, and *Nashville*.) And more important, this clears my conscience for the directors in this unit I do emphasize: Welles, Hitchcock, Nicholas Ray, Douglas Sirk, Max Ophüls, and Preston Sturges. Except for Sturges, it's a group of pronounced visual stylists, and few students can come away from these directors' films without some awareness of the meaning of "style."

The relationship of style and content may be difficult and even elusive for high schoolers, but it's a notion that, once considered, can alter their attitudes and perceptions toward film and many other subjects as well. In fact, a film course may be the only subject at the secondary level that lends itself to a discussion of aesthetics. It's possible to talk about ideas with-



out reducing them to platitudes. Other courses expose students to Arthur Miller profundities and discuss "the human condition," but a film class lets me confront students with what Vladimir Nabokov calls "aesthetic bliss."

Probably the most difficult and demanding films come in the fourth quarter when the class studies films from Eastern Europe, Italy, France, and Japan. I advise students that it will take all of us working together to sort out the basics in such complicated films as *Playtime*, *Rules of the Game*, and *Lancelot of the Lake*; but my students have succeeded with a great deal of intelligence and endurance. Given the challenge and a bit of guidance, students can often handle subject matter, themes, and ideas we teachers have condescendingly thought to be beyond their understanding.

I'll concede my students tend to be above average in intelligence. That's a help. The facilities themselves, though, are close to remedial. My school is one of those marvels of the fifties' Eisenhower-Gothic architecture, which somehow manages to combine any ugly oppressiveness with strict nonfunctionalism. The film classes are held in one of those classrooms so many of us endured in our own school years; it's swelteringly hot in the summer and even hotter in the winter when the antique furnace proves its mettle.

There is no money in the school's

budget for the film class, so we run an evening film series two nights a week and one weekend a month. Of course, we show films with broad, general appeal, and revenues have been enough to also cover rental costs and upkeep of equipment. It's a good feeling when I consider that *Night of the Living Dead*, *Young Frankenstein*, and *American Graffiti* pay for *The Bailiff*, *Mouchette*, and *Letter From an Unknown Woman*; commerce can be made to serve art.

The school administration gives encouragement and has never interfered with any evening or classroom screening. In a school system where objections have been raised against the most innocuous of books and materials, it's inevitable that there should be some complaints about my film choices. But I've learned of the complaints only long after they have been dealt with by the administrative staff. Given the choice between financial and moral support, the latter is more important for someone teaching film in a high school.

"If you think movies can't be killed," Pauline Kael once said, "you underestimate the power of education." But in the seventies it's bad movies that are killing the movies. Good teachers, instead, are busy introducing students to the films of such directors as Jean Vigo, Robert Bresson, and Yasujiro Ozu. I prefer to agree with Kael's statement that "criticism and teaching are basically the same function." In a high-school classroom, with the personal contact it allows, that function can be the most rewarding of all.

William Blackwell teaches at McLean High School in McLean, Virginia, and at American University in Washington, D.C.

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The technological dream of a "wired nation," in which cablecasting would replace broadcasting as the major means of television transmission, has been looming on the video horizon—just out of sight—for more than twenty-five years now: never quite a reality, always an enticing prospect. Indeed, cable transmission is nothing particularly new; the first community antenna radio system was constructed in Dundee, Michigan, as long ago as 1923. Yet for all this time, despite the reams of hopeful prognostications, cable has remained a relatively minor factor in the total media picture.

Until now, that is. There is good reason to believe that this aged electronic wunderkind has finally come of age, once and for all, after one of the longest adolescences in business history. There are a number of reasons for cable's prolonged development.

The basic mix of services which is now proving successful after all these years was outlined twenty years ago when Matthew Fox and Sylvester "Pat" Weaver contracted with the newly transplanted Giants and Dodgers teams for exclusive coverage of their games for their new subscription television company. Until recently, however, cable was an essentially local phenomenon. It took time to wire the nation, block by block. Even now there are only eleven million cable subscribers connected to 3,500 local systems across the nation. But this seems to be a critically large enough number to suggest the formation of national and regional networks which, in turn, should greatly accelerate the growth of cable.

More important, perhaps, is that until the mid-seventies broadcast television was a closed economic system. The networks and their affiliates were able to absorb all the advertising dollars available. But now economic pressures on the cramped, limited spectrum used by broadcast television have finally reached the point where media conglomerates have been forced to look to new areas for expansion. The airwaves are saturated. Cable offers the only logical way to increase significantly the number of transmission channels, and therefore the potential time available for sale.*

Finally, the growth of pay channel ser-

vices like Home Box Office during the last few years has had a marked synergistic effect. For the first time, cable has a unique product to sell and a national programming service with the clout to deal with the major entertainment conglomerates. Heretofore, the major service cable was selling was reception. That fact limited it to clearly circumscribed local areas—outlying districts which had poor broadcast reception or none at all, and, to a much lesser extent, a few major cities where tall buildings interfered with signals.

With the growth of separate, parallel programming services, cable can now compete directly with broadcast television. Cable is presently viable in major suburban markets where it was once superfluous. Nassau County, New York, for example, is located only twenty-five miles from New York City's 50,000-watt transmitters. In fact, reception there is often better than within the city limits. A cable system there now barely two years old has 65,000 subscribers. Ninety-eight percent, significantly, also subscribe to Home Box Office.

HBO, a subsidiary of Time, Inc., first went on the air in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, in November 1972, with 365 subscribers. By the end of September 1975, it counted 195,000 paying customers, by the end of last year, 287,000. Right now, more than half a million homes subscribe to HBO, the first successful pay television system, which is cablecast by more than 200 local systems with a potential audience of about four million homes—a little more than a third of the total homes on cable in the United States. The prospects seem—at present—limitless. No wonder several major corporate competitors have recently begun to challenge the dominance of HBO.

Before investigating their various financial arrangements, let's take a look at

number of subscribers reaches the saturation plateau, and as the rapid depreciations of "plant and equipment" cease to have value as tax write-offs, advertising will grow quickly in importance.

the way the pay cable game is played. It is an exercise in elementary set theory, the basic factors being: the number of "homes passed" by the trunk cable, the percent of "penetration" (the proportion of homes passed which subscribes), the percent of "pay channel acceptance" (the proportion of cable homes which buys the pay channel), and, of course, the number of channels transmitted. The Federal Communications Commission now requires a minimum of twenty channels on each cable system with more than 3,500 subscribers. Although many older systems have fewer, newer systems have more, and the "state of the art" at present permits as many as forty channels to be carried on the quarter-inch coaxial cable.

Even without pay channels or other program origination, cable clearly has an advantage over broadcast in the amount of material delivered in all but a few major broadcast centers. Because of the system the FCC used to divvy up the airwaves in the early fifties, even most medium-sized cities are limited to a handful of VHF stations. Most of the utopian paeans to cable concentrate on the prospective "television of abundance" the multiplicity of channels suggests.

But cable's ultimate value may stem not from the raw quantity of programming it is capable of transmitting, but rather from its directionality. Because it is wired rather than broadcast, cable transmission can be more precisely addressed. This capability is beginning to be exploited with pay channels in a very crude manner (some cable subscribers receive the pay channel, others do not); in the near future, this aspect will be much more highly sophisticated.

Despite the potential value of the vastly increased number of channels cable can provide, for many years the simple economics of the business militated against the exploitation of this significant advantage. It made good business sense to offer potential subscribers only enough service to make the cost of monthly payments worthwhile. In areas where reception was completely blocked, a few commercial channels were enough. In other, less limited areas, the cable system operator might provide several extra commercial channels from a major city farther away.

Then, in early 1972, the FCC promulgated a new set of rules for cable which required system operators, among other things, to carry nonbroadcast channels equal in number to broadcast channels

*Advertising is still a very minor factor in cable economics. At present, cable systems are still at the point where their major income is derived from the sale of the basic reception service to the individual subscribers. But as the

The Wild Party

On the Arbuckle Case

Joseph McBride

T rue or false: Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle was a silent movie comedian who killed a girl during a 1921 orgy in a San Francisco hotel.

Many people today would probably answer "true," even though Arbuckle was acquitted of charges stemming from the death of starlet Virginia Rappe after the party at the St. Francis Hotel. The only charge which stuck, after three trials and two hung juries, was a \$500 fine for serving alcohol in violation of the Volstead Act.

Although Rappe died of peritonitis, the belief that Arbuckle was guilty of her death persists, no doubt because, in an extralegal sense, he was found guilty: by the American public and the guardians of their morality in the Jazz Age. "Acquittal is not enough for Roscoe Arbuckle," the jury declared after finding him innocent of manslaughter. "We feel that a great injustice has been done him." The public thought otherwise, and, six days after he was acquitted, Arbuckle was banned from pictures by Will Hays, the censorship czar newly hired by the film moguls to clean up Hollywood's image.

David Yallop's excellent new book, *The Day the Laughter Stopped*,¹ the first serious one to be written on Arbuckle, provides a thorough documentation of the case, persuasively confirming the comedian's innocence and also providing a harrowing portrait of the vigilante mentality in America during the early 1920s.

The Arbuckle case had far-reaching consequences: Together with a string of other scandals in 1921 (including the still unsolved murder of director William Desmond Taylor and the revelation of star Wallace Reid's narcotics addiction), it started a repressive period of film industry self-policing that would eventually lead to the ouster from Hollywood of Charles Chaplin, the blacklisting in the McCarthy era, and the establishment of the film-rating system in 1968.

¹*The Day the Laughter Stopped* by David Yallop. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976, 348 pp., illustrated, \$12.50.

BOOKS

The latest manifestation of puritanical backlash is the prosecution, at a reported expense to the federal government of \$4 million, of *Deep Throat* actor Harry Reems. Like Reems, Arbuckle was a scapegoat for the public's hypocritical indignation over the relaxation of established moral constraints. "Intolerance and hysteria stalked the land," comments Yallop. "The virtuous citizens of America were watching Hollywood like a pack of jackals, about to claim a victim."

Yallop's account of the "wild party" at the St. Francis and its aftermath occupies about two-thirds of the book. The first part, covering Arbuckle's rise from vaudevillian to film star, is less interesting, because Yallop is unable to give substance to his contention that Arbuckle was the peer of Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Harold Lloyd as a silent film comedian. Arbuckle's films are rarely seen today—as if there were an informal perpetuation of the Hays edict—and those of us with only sketchy knowledge of his work need a more persuasive critical analysis than Yallop's to begin a reevaluation.

But the part of the book dealing with the trial and Arbuckle's subsequent broken life is highly dramatic material: the story of a man ensnared in a nightmare. It reads like a James M. Cain novel. The Arbuckle Yallop portrays is a gentle soul, a good friend to his co-workers, a dedi-

Fatty Arbuckle, before scandal cut him down, with Charlie Chaplin in The Rounders.

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cated practitioner of the art of comedy. Not a lascivious monster.

The reader's initial fears that the book might turn out to be no more than a lurid rehash of the scandal along the lines of Kenneth Anger's *Hollywood Babylon* are allayed by Yallop's painstaking attempts to track down the answer to every question concerning the case. He interviewed a number of key surviving figures, including all of Arbuckle's three wives (two have since died), and he has managed to unearth court transcripts which had been thought lost for more than three decades. It is a formidable piece of research, flawed only by Yallop's failure to credit his sources. When he makes a categorical assertion about the bias of the prosecutors or their witnesses, the reader would like to know exactly how, after fifty-five years, he came to those conclusions. The book is so convincing in most particulars that the few flaws are unfortunate.

As Yallop outlines the case presented against Arbuckle, public opinion, molded by the ambitious San Francisco District Attorney Matthew Brady, made it virtually impossible for the facts to be presented in a dispassionate manner.

The judge at the initial police court hearing, in an unusually frank admission, declared, "We are not trying Roscoe Arbuckle alone; we are not trying the screen celebrity who has given joy and pleasure to the entire world; we are actually, gentlemen, in a large sense trying ourselves. We are trying our present-day morals, our present-day social conditions, our present-day looseness of thought and lack of social balance." The country was in a lynching mood, and it took many days in court before Arbuckle's innocence became an inescapable conclusion.

The coercion of witnesses by Brady and his staff reached shocking proportions. One who didn't have to be coerced was Maude Delmont, a woman who accompanied Rappe to the party and, Yallop contends, sparked the scandal as a means of playing "the badger game" on Arbuckle—she hoped to catch the comedian in a compromising position with Rappe and blackmail him for money. When that failed, Delmont resorted to outright falsehoods, claiming that Arbuckle had "jumped on Virginia and crushed her bladder," when, in fact, the young woman's bladder was already seriously damaged by venereal disease and alcohol. Yallop argues that medical malpractice in the week following the party was the actual cause of Rappe's death.

Seeing Arbuckle's films today, it is difficult to view his brand of comedy as the innocent thing it once was. His obesity, originally a subject of amusement, now makes him seem grotesque. Yallop mentions Arbuckle's "curious" penchant for transvestism on screen, and quotes his wives as saying that his obesity made him

shy and childlike as a bed partner. Perhaps the public of the time, after initially being amused by Arbuckle's antics, later turned on him with such vehemence because of a suspicion that underneath the jollity was a disturbed man who felt unsure of his sexuality. That would explain the public's alacrity to view "Fatty" (a nickname he loathed) as a charming buffoon one day, and a monster the next.

"Arbuckle's weight will damn him," attorney Earl Rogers perceptively observed at the beginning of the case. "If he were an ordinary man, his own spotless reputation, his clean pictures would save him. They'll never convict him, but this will ruin him and maybe motion pictures for some time."

Most of what Rogers said came true. Hollywood wasn't ruined, but it was a tight escape. Arbuckle's employers at Paramount and Famous Players-Lasky, Adolph Zukor and Jesse Lasky, led the move to establish the Hays office and helped institute the so-called "morality clause" that would allow film companies to dissolve their contracts with any actor suspected of moral turpitude. It was a time of incredible hypocrisy. As Jackie Coogan recalled to Yallop, "Hollywood front offices decided to go moral. Guys were told to cut themselves down to two or three mistresses. Zukor, Lasky, and [Joseph] Schenck would go which way the dollar pointed."

There were a few people in Hollywood who braved the witch-hunt and befriended Arbuckle. Keaton remained loyal, and so did Schenck, despite what Coogan says. Director James Cruze, in his last film *Hollywood*, hired Arbuckle for a scathing vignette in which a "No Work Today" sign was displayed when the forlorn comedian approached a casting office. Hays lifted the ban after a few months, but the resulting public outcry caused him and Zukor to persuade Arbuckle not to attempt a comeback.

Arbuckle found employment as a director, under the pseudonym of William Goodrich, and toward the end of his life he acted in a few more short comedies. But the damage was done, and it was irreparable. Arbuckle died in 1933, at the age of forty-six.

"This was the story of beauty and the beast, of violation of the innocent, and it was a story the American psyche of 1921 seemed to need," Yallop says. "Americans, watching the loosening of morals, were afraid of what would happen to them—and to their daughters. Roscoe Arbuckle walked right into a myth in the making and gave it form." It is a sobering tale, one with a message for today's would-be reformers and their overanxious supporters in the film industry.

Joseph McBride is a California-based writer and film critic.

Film and the Audience

On the Open-Closed Theory

Sam Kula

The title Leo Braudy has selected for his approach¹ to film is both catchy and misleading. It is not what we actually see in films that attracts his critical eye, but that with which we connect, relate, or empathize. And it is not the frame on which he focuses his analysis—nor even the shot or sequence of shots the frames construct. What objectively occurs in the frame—the signs and symbols, the iconographic referents—he leaves to the semiologists.

Braudy explains his own approach early in the book:

"Most theories of film are generative; they concentrate on how films are created. But I would like to begin with the receptive: what films are like in the experience of the audience and how they achieve those effects. The audience for an interesting film should be potentially as mixed as the audience for a Dickens novel, a Hogarth print, or a Shakespeare play. So, too, a responsive film criticism should try to touch on all the possible values a film might have, all the different levels of response it can reach, within an audience or within an individual."

It is the total interaction between films and their audience, and the multitudinous connections between films and the other arts, to which Braudy moors his theory of film.

From that mooring the cast is wide, indeed, and frequently deep: "Like all new orderings of human experience, film allows us to reevaluate the past, to cut across the old divisions between the arts and in the process to create a criticism that ignores the academic compartmentalization of the arts and sciences....The passivity of the film audience need not be a type of hypnosis or mind control, but an experiment in new possibilities of connection and uncertainty, rather than the

ideal of pure principles and idyllic, edenic stasis....The viewer who would understand the true complexities of film must therefore first avoid the distinction between criteria of enjoyment and criteria of judgment, for enjoyment can lead to a new perception of underlying form." Braudy, it should be clear, is a professor of English at Columbia University, and has authored a sympathetic study of Renoir, *Jean Renoir: The World of His Films*, as well as respectable sound academic works such as *Narrative Form in History and Fiction: Hume, Fielding, and Gibbon*.

I don't know how he feels about Edward Gibbon, but Renoir is obviously a filmmaker to whom he responds positively, if not warmly (Braudy holds his enthusiasm in check at all times). In this work he uses Renoir to mark one of the "two major ways in which films present the world"—realistic or "open," while Fritz Lang serves to define the opposite pole—expressionistic, or "closed." Or, in Braudy's words, "two distinct, although often in practice intertwined, ways of confining and defining the objects of the visual world."

For Braudy the open and closed film are part of a historic and aesthetic continuity, "not antagonists but collaborators in the way films have changed our world." The blurring of this distinction in the late



Pierre Fresnay and Erich von Stroheim in *Grand Illusion*, an "open" film.

fifties and sixties enables Braudy to discuss the films of the seventies in terms of the way "they impose structures of perception upon the audience and how such structures reverberate on levels of meaning and subject matter that otherwise have no visual equivalent."

In exploring the polarities he has established ("In a closed film the world of the film is the only thing that exists....In an open film the world of the film is a momentary frame around an ongoing reality"), Braudy links his auteurs (although the term troubles him) with the other arts, probing their narrative roots or their poetic reach. Lang, Alfred Hitchcock, and

¹*The World in a Frame: What We See in Films* by Leo Braudy. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1976, 274 pp., \$8.95.

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Orson Welles share an autocratic control over every element in the frame—characters give way to architecture—while Renoir, Roberto Rossellini, and Nicholas Ray open their films to the world of the senses relying on the strength of their characters to hold and focus our attention. Both approaches are rich in potential in gifted hands: “Only the open directors could make a truly picaresque film, only the closed directors could make a film that truly explores the obsessions of the individual.”

In Braudy's hands the critical devices turn up a slew of insights:

“The upside-down claustrophobia of *The Poseidon Adventure*, which occurs in the middle of the unavailable openness of the ocean outside, is only the contemporary version of a paranoia about our helplessness before events that has been the special subject of closed films since the earliest days of cinema.... In John Schlesinger films such as *Darling*, *Midnight Cowboy*, and *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* what I have been describing as a complex interaction between openness and enclosure becomes a destructive paradox. Specifically, the conflict is between the accurate observation of the facts of social reality and the exaggeration of those facts for the purposes of satire.... Stanley Kubrick fits definitely into the tradition of Lang and Hitchcock because of his fascination with aesthetic limits, whether those of the crime film (*The Killing*), the war film (*Paths of Glory*), or the science-fiction film (*2001: A Space Odyssey*; *A Clockwork Orange*).... Once we have accepted the standards of his totally enclosed world we can accept everything inside it.... We realize that everyone in *Dr. Strangelove* is deadly serious, it is the world itself that is insane.”

The comments, elegantly phrased, the fruits of exhaustive notetaking in the dark, touch on an impressive range of filmmakers—John Ford, Jean-Luc Godard, Howard Hawks, Ingmar Bergman, Richard Lester, Luis Buñuel, Vincente Minnelli, and a hundred others—but returning again and again to Lang and Renoir, the touchstones of the theory. Drawing genealogies, as Braudy admits, quickly gets out of hand in this quicksilver art form, but in the sixties the masters metaphorically pass the torch to the New Wave—Renoir and Rossellini more influential in terms of style; Lang and Hitchcock more influential in terms of subject matter. The “enclosed story in the open world”: Truffaut leaning toward Renoir, and Godard toward Lang. “The master image of the new aesthetic is the last shot of Truffaut's *The 400 Blows*—the open sea and the frozen face of Antoine Doinel (Jean-Pierre L  aud), potentiality and stasis, the possibility of both open exten-



Sylvia Sydney and Spencer Tracy in Fritz Lang's *Fury*, a “closed” film.

sion beyond the frame and closed con-
striction within the frame.”

The argument is compelling, piece by piece. The facts are facts, and the sequences selected lend themselves to the percepts without visible manipulation. One can argue with some of the assertions, particularly the causal relationships between film and social, economic, and political realities in America, but none are outrageous, and all are solidly grounded on a close reading of the films and/or careers involved. The problem is that reading Braudy, while stimulating and thought-provoking in process, leaves one ultimately dissatisfied, as though the sum of the parts were somehow less than the whole one expected. The approach is so wide-ranging that the illumination he sparks flickers weakly over acres of screen.

Visual and aural form, the open-closed theory, constitutes approximately one third of *The World in a Frame*. The middle section explores genres, the influence of tradition and convention on films and what effect that has had on audience commonality, their collective experience. The final chapter focuses on acting and characterization and “the varieties of connection we may have with the faces and bodies on the screen.” Here again the range of film references is wide, the writing sharp and to the point, and the connections between films knowing and productive. The essay on genre, in particular, is a brilliant assessment of the vitality and regenerative power of conventional narrative structures despite their growing self-awareness and occasional parody.

Braudy brings to his critical task a mind that is filled with the kinds of connections he contends films and audiences should establish, between films and between films and the cultural matrix outside the theater. In the larger frame of life, “movies have helped us to know and expand our lives as much as they have held a mirror up to them.... Whatever their stories, whatever their methods, movies show us how to be human in ways that the other arts cannot.” Amen.

Sam Kula is the director of the National Film Archives of Canada.

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8. **Dictionary of Film Makers*** by Georges Sadoul \$5.95 / **\$4.75**
10. **American Film Criticism*** edited by Stanley Kauffmann with Bruce Henstell \$3.95 / **\$2.95**
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37. **The View From Highway 1** by Michael J. Arlen \$8.95 / **\$7.15**

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On Film Encyclopedias

Larry Swindell

Hardly more than a dozen years ago, comprehensive reference works on motion pictures, if they did exist, were not generally accessible. Now we are confounded by a plethora of variably flawed film encyclopedias, not one of which can be considered an authority for the medium.

But during its extended period of preparation, it was thought that *The Oxford Companion to Film*¹ would emerge as the bible of film art and industry. For good reason: The Oxford companions to music, art, literature, and theater are, if not definitive, vital for their breadth and depth of information, and for critical perspectives that distinguish between historical and contemporary values. Above all, they are trustworthy, and diligently accurate in factual minutiae.

Some future Oxford volume may serve film comparably, but it will not likely be a revision of this new *Companion*. Better to start all over. The maiden edition is nothing less than a disaster. It is also a disgrace, for the research performance is inexcusable and unforgivable.

Before coming earnestly to grips with the content, I obeyed a selfish impulse and checked the entries for the players whose biographies I have written. The opening sentence about Spencer Tracy indicated that he gave up the study of medicine to become an actor in New York. Not so. The young Tracy made vague and insincere statements about a medical ambition but was conniving for a theatrical career all along, and against his own wishes was pushed into college by his parents. He left Ripon College to try his luck on Broadway.

The John Garfield installment cites Julian as his real forename. Not so. He was Julius, and only briefly, in 1929, tried Julian as a professional name. He was well

known on the stage as Jules Garfield for several years before entering films. The *Companion* says Warner Bros. signed him after he was "widely noticed in *Golden Boy*," although Garfield only had a minor role in the production. (The romantic lead in *Having Wonderful Time* was his passport to Hollywood.) It also states that Garfield was about to play the lead in a Broadway revival of *Golden Boy* when he died of a heart attack. However, he had played it already, successfully, and the run had just ended.

It is of no importance whatever (in film study) whether or not Spencer Tracy studied medicine, or what prompted John Garfield's switch to Hollywood. Their accomplishments on film are what matter. But these are the kinds of errors that appear throughout the book. I noted more than a hundred errors before I stopped counting, and almost all of those pertained to American films. The coverage of foreign films seems more authoritative, but if the trivial information is abundantly erroneous, can the more important material be trusted? Of course, it cannot.

To begin with there's a paucity of "important" material. Most of the thousands of alphabetized entries—film titles, people, themes, techniques, miscellaneous topics—are sketchy, relying on platitudes and offering no real illumination.

But the book could dislodge charades as a favorite parlor game for scholars intent on finding errors in the text. Let's have some more samples: *Tarnished Lady* was not George Cukor's first credited direction; *Grumpy* was a full year earlier. Eleanor Powell first tap-danced on film in *George White's 1935 Scandals*, not in *Broadway Melody of 1936*.

We know they really mean nominations, but the *Companion to Film* tells us that Katharine Hepburn won eleven Oscars. And the editors often confuse studios, especially Warner Bros. and MGM, as in this notation for Maureen O'Sullivan: "She [also] appeared in a number of Warner Bros.' major productions, including *The Thin Man*, *David Copperfield*, and *Anna Karenina*, and even found herself in the company of the Marx Brothers in *A Day at the Races*." The pallid entry for Clarence Brown has him directing Greta Garbo and Clark Gable in *Romance*, in which Gable did not appear. Nor did Brown ever direct them together: The only Garbo-Gable occasion was *Susan Lenox*; *Her Fall and Rise* which Robert Z. Leonard directed.

The mistakes get smaller and more numerous. Cary Grant did not become the screen's first free-lance star in 1937; Fredric March was well advertised as that

three years earlier. Irene Dunne's last film was *It Grows on Trees*, not *The Grass Is Greener*, which came eight years later, without her. Richard Basehart's screen debut was not in *Cry Wolf*, but *Repeat Performance*; and Errol Flynn's last picture was not *Too Much, Too Soon*, but *Cuban Rebel Girls*.

Beyond the mistakes that will jar only the pedants, more grievous are the careless and often dubious judgments. The claim that Broderick Crawford gave an outstanding comedy performance in *Born Yesterday* merits an argument. The "lamentable miscasting" of Garbo in *Grand Hotel* is another opinion contrary to consensus. I, for one, will question Alec Guinness's "notable excursion into farce" in *Hotel Paradiso*. Despite its early Technicolor achievement, *The Garden of Allah* was neither a good picture nor a "particular success" for Charles Boyer.

Disagreement with qualitative judgments is inevitable. The real failure of the *Companion to Film* is its frequent rejection of established critical consensus in favor of erratic and often contradictory viewpoints of unidentified contributors.

The compilation is not without its virtues. There is a splendid account of animation, for example, and a very satisfactory definition of *cinéma vérité*. The foreign directors are taken up intelligently. There are particularly thoughtful considerations of Ingmar Bergman and Vittorio DeSica, and an exuberant introduction to Jean-Luc Godard. Every now and then an actor—James Cagney, for instance—comes in for description that is crisp, knowing, and just right. But wait. The long (1,500 words) abstract on Alfred Hitchcock seems as informed as it is appreciative, systematically examining his oeuvre; but then I'm chagrined by no mention of *Foreign Correspondent*, and finally appalled that there is no acknowledgment of *Vertigo*, one of his masterpieces.

Most of the director appraisals are unofficially fixed in the auteur theory. Budd Boetticher receives an entry longer than William Wyler. There are some instructive essays (John Ford, Buster Keaton), but much cold porridge (Charles Chaplin, D. W. Griffith). Fritz Lang gets a longer and better accounting than Josef von Sternberg, who, nevertheless, is better served than Ernst Lubitsch.

The roll call of players is vulnerable to attack on the basis of who is included and who isn't and how they are treated. The editors show more loyalty to film mythology than to history and honest achievement. Consequently, the James Dean write-up is twice as long as the unsatisfactory one accorded Montgomery Clift; and Fay Wray's is double the length of Myrna Loy's. The Marx Brothers rate

¹*The Oxford Companion to Film* edited by Liz Anne Bawden. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976, 767 pp., illustrated, \$24.95.

²*A Biographical Dictionary of Film* by David Thomson. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1976, 629 pp., \$16.95, paper \$7.95.

700 words as against 100 for, say, Ronald Colman. I'm mildly curious that more is said about Joan Fontaine than Olivia de Havilland, and Walter Pidgeon's treatment is slightly longer than Greer Garson's. Bob Hope can chortle over having four lines more than Bing Crosby. Gene Kelly's sketch is only one-third as long as either Fred Astaire's or Frank Sinatra's.

Sloppiness is most evident in the attention to actresses. Not to deny their considerable skills, it seems imprudent to give relatively long paragraphs to Ruth Gordon, Angela Lansbury, and even Patricia Collinge when there are so many rude omissions. Every star fashion is presumably tracked, yet while Ann Harding and Kay Francis are in the inventory, their superior contemporary Ruth Chatterton is not. Ann Sheridan, Gene Tierney, and Jane Wyman, all of whom were stars for a time, are absent. So are Linda Darnell and Anne Baxter. Glenda Farrell's in, but not Eve Arden. Theda Bara's blurb dwarfs Norma Shearer's.

The Louise Brooks cultists can rest assured of her inclusion. She's a lovely and articulate lady, but was her career really more notable than, say, Eleanor Parker's? In the fifties, Parker put together an impressive string of dramatic performances, with three Academy Award nominations. But she's not in the *Companion*. Brigitte Bardot's profile should not be more expansive than Marlene Dietrich's; and it's much longer than the one that poorly serves Bette Davis. I could nitpick forever.

Liz-Anne Bawden, as general editor, must be held accountable at least in part. About fifty contributors are enumerated, but the book is a hodgepodge aching for the unified perspective that editorial direction must provide. Perhaps a more satisfactory solution would be to turn the project over to one omniscient scholar.

Or perhaps not. The result might then approximate David Thomson's *A Biographical Dictionary of Film*.² It's a regaling but infuriating book, whose often outrageous opinions are potentially more dangerous than the bland pronouncements of the *Oxford Companion to Film*.

There's no duplicity on Thomson's part. His compendium is "personal, opinionated, and obsessive." To know the assessments are his alone, you only have to read the three-page introduction. But this is an individualized work of film criticism that masquerades as a reference book, and people do not read introductions to reference books. They merely refer to the entries; and as often as not, accept them as gospel. It isn't safe to do that here, for Thomson's critical stance is not easily divined. He's his own man, all right—an auteurist by inclination, but with maverick tendencies. (He's tough on Ford, just for a start.)

My grievance is essentially with his format. Taking exception to his opinions is only academic. But he does have a vexing way of making statements that seem absolute when they are only his notions, and rather eccentric ones at that. An example is in his essay on Lucille Ball, in which Thomson says, "In 1974 she made by far her most successful film, *Mame*." Whether he means successful financially, or successful artistically is not indicated; but *Mame* was an acknowledged commercial disappointment, and neither critics nor public gave it warm endorsement.

But we should make allowances for Thomson's British viewpoint (as we also must for the Oxford editors'). This does not hamper Thomson's technical evaluation of American directors, which is often informed. But if he doesn't like a picture, his inclination is to blame the director, when it is often the cultural barrier which inhibits his enjoyment. The essential Americanness (or Britishness) of a film is often inherent in its script. Unfortunately, Thomson pays no attention to writers—or to cinematographers and other technicians. (The Oxford volume does give autonomous attention to the outstanding figures in every major support function of moviemaking.)

Thomson does admit a few producers, but his emphasis is on directors, going all the way back to Georges Méliès. Actors and actresses are present in greater number, but their essays are less incisive, often an enumeration of credits easily found in other reference works. The Eleanor Parkers and Ann Sheridans do make Thomson's scene, and there's no denying Louise Brooks; but then he's hardly selective, with more than 800 biographical entries. He isn't prone to error, but in a humdrum recitation of Carole Lombard's starring vehicles he can forget all about *True Confession*.

The advent of two contrastingly flawed volumes points up anew the need for a full-scope motion-picture encyclopedia with authoritative "ball park" critical estimates, and with both sides heard from in controversial matters.

Of the single-volume reference books now in print, the best is probably Leslie Halliwell's *The Filmgoer's Companion*, despite its cheeky, campy tone. It is now in its fourth revised edition. One is never in doubt if an opinion is Halliwell's own or a more general one, and he is always entertaining. The most valuable appraisal of players, however, is David Shipman's two-volume *The Great Movie Stars*. But Shipman, too, is British...and so is Halliwell. For American films, are there no American encyclopedists?

Larry Swindell is literary editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and author of *Screwball: The Life of Carole Lombard*.

transmitted. The nonbroadcast channels were to include one public access channel, a local government channel, an educational channel, and leaseable channels. In a sense, cable operators were being required to explore new areas of potential profit!

A number of companies sprang up to provide local system operators* with various programming services, supplied on film or tape. It was the advent of Home Box Office, however, which marked the coming of age of cable. With HBO (and similar pay channel services) cable has moved from selling a service to selling a product. By splitting the pay channel fee with HBO, the system operator can, with negligible capital investment, increase revenues by thirty to fifty percent, and more.

Previously, in order to increase profits it was necessary to lay more cable to pass more homes, or to increase penetration of homes already passed through aggressive sales methods. The pay channel offered a vital, easy new source of profit and system operators rushed to take advantage of it. HBO grew so rapidly because, to put it simply, it was an economic idea whose time had come. Cable could offer it just enough potential subscribers to make it viable and HBO, in turn, could offer cable a needed shot in the arm.

The major problem was quickly seen to be the shortage of product. Although HBO has recently experimented with producing its own shows (generally, straight tapes of nightclub routines—Robert Klein, Bette Midler, David Steinberg) and buying foreign television product (the BBC "Pallisers" series, marketed in this country—as luck would have it—by Time-Life Television), its major thrust has been to coax agreements from the U.S. studios to guarantee a steady flow of domestic film product.

The film studios, on their part, were quick to realize that cable could be integrated into the distribution pattern for theatrical films. Moreover, all of them except Universal and Paramount have made corporate decisions to become actively involved in the pay television business.

Several months ago, Time, Inc. (HBO's parent) entered into a reported \$5 million deal with Columbia Pictures to finance feature films. A separate nonexclusive licensing agreement between

*Although it is true that cable is not yet organized in networks, it is misleading to talk of "local system operators." The majority of the 3,500 discrete cable systems in the country is owned and operated by large corporations. The largest cable conglomerate is Teleprompter, with 122 systems and 1.1 million subscribers. Warner Communications Inc.'s cable subsidiary has a stable of more than 140 systems, but only half as many subscribers. Viacom International counts 290,000 subscribers.

HBO and Columbia gives HBO "access" to all the company's current films. (The deal was especially timely for Columbia which, until recently, had depended more heavily than the other major studios on now-threatened tax-shelter deals.) More recently, Columbia announced the formation of a separate division of the company to acquire and develop outside product for pay cable—foreign television, independent productions, and, eventually, original shows.

Ironically, pay television's historic enemies, motion picture exhibitors, stand to benefit considerably from the long-feared success of their old nemesis, since it promises an infusion of capital for production at a time when the exhibitors themselves are starved for product. It seems likely that in twenty-five years broadcast television has shrunk theatrical film audiences as much as they can be shrunk and that, since theaters are still the front line of exploitation for the major studios, exhibitors will lose very little of their audiences to cable. The real losers should be the networks, since they stand third in line in the distribution pattern behind theaters and cable. But the networks certainly are in no danger of imminent bankruptcy.

While HBO is at present clearly the leader in the pay services field, there is a wide spectrum of competition ranging from so-called "stand-alone" operators (sometimes served by programming services such as Telemation or Cinamerica) to a number of burgeoning networks similar in structure to HBO. The major difference until now between HBO and free-lance programming services has been in terms of distribution. As long as programming is delivered on tape (both three-quarter-inch cassettes and two-inch reel-to-reel are used) the service is comparable to syndicated rather than broadcast network television. But once the programming is distributed by microwave relay or communications satellite it takes on some of the feel of standard broadcast network television. Until 1975, HBO relied on microwave relays. A year ago it began transmitting programs via the RCA Satcom II satellite, using two "transponders," one for the eastern and central time zones, another for mountain and western. All HBO transmissions are in "real time"; that is, audiences see a program at the same time as HBO sends it.

Stand-alone pay channels and syndication services are clearly not a significant challenge to the growing HBO network. Within the last few months, however, a number of competitors have decided to challenge HBO directly. Optical Systems Corporation's "Channel 100" went na-

tional in early November using two transponders on the Westar II satellite to transmit four separate programming formats.

Previously a local operation mainly in California, Channel 100 had been programming eight owned-and-operated systems as well as two affiliates from which it had leased whole channels (similar to four-wall booking in theatrical distribution). Alan Greenstadt, president of Optical Systems, thinks the multiformat potential will offer a significant advantage over HBO's single-format program. Movie ratings, for example, have become an important consideration. There are a number of rural, southern, and midwestern local systems which are wary of R-rated films and would welcome a format strictly limited to G and PG product.

"Hollywood Home Theatre," the joint pay cable effort of Twentieth Century-Fox and United Artists which is just beginning operations, intends to carry this concept one step further by regionalizing its services. "By aggressively going after stand-alone operators and custom designing packages," director of operations John Berentson thinks, HHT will be able to make up for lost time against HBO. Already HHT is transmitting a package of Philadelphia sports and movies to cable systems in the Philadelphia area and has entered into an agreement with the Atlanta Braves organization for a southern sports network distributed by satellite. Discussions with other sports teams are going on. Since local sports is one area of program material which is at present underexploited, HHT may have some leverage through this approach.

While Fox and UA experiment with HHT, Columbia cements its relationship with HBO (and Universal busies itself with videodiscs rather than cable). Warner Communications, one of the largest owners of cable systems, seems to be marking time with regard to pay television.

"Star Channel," Warner's in-house pay channel, has been in operation for several years, yet only ten of Warner's 140 systems use Star Channel (several have even recently dropped out, switching to HBO) and there seem to be no plans to try to market Star Channel programming outside the Warner systems. While Madge Rubinstein, director of operations, insists Star Channel is an aggressive competitor, the Warner pay TV program seems to be little more than a holding operation, possibly useful for bargaining with HBO.

Meanwhile, Viacom International, like Warner a leading owner of local systems, has begun "Showtime," a pay channel designed first to serve Viacom's own systems but also available to others. Distributed on three-quarter-inch tape, Showtime is not yet a major competitor but

Viacom's base of 290,000 subscribers may soon make it so.

At present, competition is strictly on the system level. That is, no cable operator offers more than one channel of pay programming to his subscribers. HBO's standard contract, in fact, gives them the right to cancel an agreement should a local system operator decide to offer an additional channel of pay television. Yet this situation should change relatively soon. HBO has already captured most of the major markets. HHT and Channel 100 may offer more varied programming, but the format is essentially the same and it is hard to see why local system operators would want to switch from HBO to HHT or Channel 100. They may, however, want to offer *additional* pay programming, and this is a key part of Channel 100's plans.

HBO, for its part, has already responded to the trend towards regionalization by cutting down on its coverage of Madison Square Garden sports on its western transponder. John Barrington, HBO vice-president for public relations, thinks the pay cable competition will fairly quickly transcend regionalization. The key is a device called the "addressable tap," an electronic switch which would allow a computer at the "headend" (transmitter) to turn on or off a given subscriber. The addressable tap would involve further capital expenditures on a significant scale, but the advantages may be worth it, for then pay cable could personalize programming.

Other technological developments, such as fiber optics, continue to multiply the number of channels available a thousandfold. Meanwhile, Home Box Office, Hollywood Home Theatre, Channel 100, and, to a lesser extent, Showtime, will be engaged in an interesting contest to divvy up the available cable subscribers between them.

There is no doubt that pay television is now profitable. In fact, the next round of challenges for the market may come not from cable but from the broadcast area. Oak Industries Inc., and Jerry Perenchio (president of Norman Lear's TAT Communications) recently bought Los Angeles's UHF channel KBSC-TV with the intention of operating it as an over-the-air pay channel. Subscription service is supposed to begin in January.

If KBSC succeeds, the rules for the pay cable game will have to be drastically rewritten. As successful as cable has been during the last five years, its eleven million subscribers still comprise a relatively small audience as compared with the hundreds of millions for broadcast television.

James Monaco is the author of *The New Wave* and an associate editor of *Take One*.

Periodicals

Recent writings of note on film and television. For information on where listed publications can be obtained write to Education Liaison, The American Film Institute, J. F. Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C. 20566

Antonio Chemasi

Small Premises

"In America," an interviewer told François Truffaut, "films aren't treated equally." Truffaut's reply: "Because they begin by saying, 'This is a B-movie.' That's one of the reasons why I'd be worried about making a film here. I like to make films which start with a small premise. It's very hard to do that here. When I look back over the last twenty years of American films, the ones I like are those which are completely off the margins, such as *Johnny Got His Gun* and *The Honeymoon Killers*. But in France they consider me a very traditional filmmaker."

"Kid Stuff" by Joseph McBride and Todd McCarthy. *Film Comment*, September-October 1976.

But, Oh, the Disadvantages

Richard Roud, who runs the New York Film Festival, was asked what trends he finds lately in movies. His reply: "Long films! Longer and longer. We have the Bertolucci film, *1900*, which is five hours and ten minutes; the Marcel Ophüls film is four and a half hours; the new Wim Wenders film is three hours minus two minutes; there are simply a lot of long films. Directors are apologetic today when they have to say that their film is only an hour and a quarter!"

"Richard Roud Talks." *Thousand Eyes*, October 1976.

Better Mediocrity

The influential film critics are well known, but who are the influential TV critics? *More* says three are on *The New York Times*: Les Brown, who specializes in reporting and is much admired by younger critics; John Leonard, who writes witty and cutting essays about TV culture; and John O'Connor, who does straight reviewing and was the first critic to force networks to prescreen shows. *More* cites two others among the established and influential: Michael Arlen of *The New Yorker*, whose thoughtful essays have been collected in two books praised for their style as much as their judgment; and Marvin Kitman of *Newsday*, who has drolly written about television for seven years and is convinced "the higher level of mediocrity we have today is due to my writing."

"Surprise! TV Critics Count" by James Monaco. *More*, October 1976.

The Telltale Heart

Harlan Ellison, the science-fiction writer, on sci-fi films: "There is no genre of science-fiction film. It's spread too far and overlaps into fantasy and horror and terror. *Repulsion* is probably as close to a science-fiction film as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. They can both be taken as psychological dramas. There is not tradition because it's just too scattergunned. There are films that I think epitomize the science-fiction idiom; one that comes instantly to my mind is *Charly*, which I think is as close to a perfect science-fiction movie as I've ever seen—brilliant acting, excellent direction, and it deals with the core matter that I think all science fiction should and hopefully does deal with, which is the core matter that all literature deals with, which is as Faulkner says, 'the human heart in conflict with itself.'"

"I Have No Wings and I Must Fly" by Steve Swires. *Take One*, October 1976.

They Have Faces Now

The Wall Street Journal, surveying TV coverage of local news, reports that "it's widely felt that the local news show has

become pure entertainment." The problem, the *Journal* finds, "is that local TV stations, in the brutal competition for advertising revenues, must do everything they can to tempt the maximum number of viewers to watch their news shows. This, obviously, produces a conflict between style and substance." In fact, the *Journal* reports, "some national TV newsmen have worried publicly that the local stations' predilection for handsome, seemingly vacuous, anchormen to boost ratings is chipping away at the credibility of all TV journalists."

"Entertainment, Action Are Major Ingredients of the Local TV News" by Philip Revzin. *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 October 1976.

Dressed for Action

Howard Hawks, in an interview, recalled his advice to Josef von Sternberg on how to introduce Marlene Dietrich in *Morocco*: "I said, 'Put her on a bare stage with no props, a chair, and a man's evening clothes. Let her lean on the back of the chair, sitting backwards, and sing a song and then get up and walk through the audience and have a pretty girl applaud her and have her look at the pretty girl with interest, grin, and go on....' And he did it."

"Howard Hawks: A Private Interview" by Peter Lehman and staff. *Wide Angle*, Summer 1976.

But a Sweet Sixteen

In its first issue, *American Classic Screen* has printed a helpful guide to the major film journals published throughout the world; appraisals of Ginger Rogers and Mary Pickford; and an interview with Rouben Mamoulian, the director of *Queen Christina* and *Silk Stockings*, who says, "You know, the irony and the pathos is that I've only made sixteen films. People think I've made hundreds, you know, and at those Mamoulian film festivals in foreign countries people are always asking after seeing all of my films, 'Well, these are the best, but what about the others you made?' I tell them, 'I've made no others.'"

"Rouben Mamoulian" by William Hare. *American Classic Screen*, September-October 1976.

American Film Index to Volume I, October 1975– September 1976

This index is based on indexing rules and subject headings for film periodicals developed by the Federation of International Film Archives (FIAF) in 1971. In order to be as useful as possible to English-speaking readers of *American Film*, ours differs from FIAF's in several ways. This index is divided into four main parts: a subject index, an author index, a film review index and a book review index. FIAF uses a separate "personalities" index which this index combines with the subject index, and FIAF uses no author index. FIAF indexes film reviews under original titles only, this index uses the original title only if it is better-known than the English title. We include in our subject index the names of directors of reviewed films.

Subjects

AFI—See: American Film Institute ADAPTATIONS

(If material deals with the adaptations of a specific author's works, see name of author, e.g., **Chandler, Raymond**; **Dickens, Charles**.)

McMurtry, Larry. *McMurtry on the Movies*. 1:3 Dec 1975, 4-5, 69; 1:4 Jan-Feb 1976, 8-9, 65; 1:5 March 1976, 6-7, 73. illus. by Ken Rinciani. Problems of adapting books to films. Ref. *The Last Picture Show* (Bogdanovich).

See also: Books, Film; Scriptwriters and Scriptwriting

Agee, James
Dardis, Thomas. *James Agee: The Man Who Loved the Movies*. 1:8 June 1976, 62-67. illus. Career: scripts, reviews, critical writings. Ref. *The Blue Hotel* (unproduced) and *The African Queen* (Huston).

American Film Institute

AFI Member News. Regular column appearing in each issue of *American Film*. A newsletter from the Public Information Office on the Institute and its activities and programs.

Grogg, Sam L. Jr. *Film Education vs. Film Career*. 1:4 Jan-Feb 1976, 3. Response to IATSE's comments on AFI's *Guide to College Courses in Film and Television*.

Anger, Kenneth

Turan, Kenneth. *Kenneth Anger's Magic Quest: The Underground Man*. 1:6 April 1976, 78-82. illus. Career, personality.

Animation—See: Yellow Ball Workshop

Ann Arbor Festival

Daniels, Edgar. *Explorations: Attitudes at Ann Arbor*. 1:9 July-Aug 1976, 67, 79.

Anthropology and The Cinema

See: Ethnography and The Cinema

Apted, Michael

Wiener, Thomas. *The Rise and Fall of Rock Film: From Woodstock to Stardust, the Parade's Gone By*. 1:3 Dec 1975, 58-63. illus.

Ashby, Hal

Dialogue on Film: Robert Towne. 1:3 Dec 1975, 33-48. Interview. illus. Towne's scriptwriting career. Includes *The Last Detail* and *Shampoo*.

Audiences and Audience Research

Flamini, Roland. *Television and the Mago Factor*. 1:7 May 1976, 50-53. illus. Testing TV shows before putting them on the air. Ref. Audience Studies Inc. and the Preview House.

Gunning, Tom. *The Participatory Film*. 1:1 Oct 1975, 81-83. illus. Essential concern of avant-garde filmmakers—the relationship between audience and film. Films of analysis rather than films of reverie. Ref. George Landow (*Institutional Quality and Remedial Reading Comprehension*) and Hollis Frampton (*Zorns Lemma and Nostalgia*).

See also: Presidents of USA, Favorite Films of Auteur Theory

Thomson, David. *Focus on Education: The Obsessive Art*. 1:9 July-Aug 1976, 75-77. illus. Pros, cons of using the auteur theory as the core of a film course.

See also: Critics and Criticism: Study and Teaching

Avant-Garde Films and Filmmakers

Awards

See: Peabody Awards, names of Festivals, e.g., Cannes

Badham, John

See: Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars and Motor Kings, The Bergman, Ingmar

Dialogue on Film: Ingmar Bergman. 1:4 Jan-Feb 1976, 33-48. illus. Interview. filmogr. How he works with actors, his scriptwriting, dreams in his films, music, his relationship to the camera, film vs. theater directing.

Bernstein, Elmer—See: Music

Biblical Films—See: Religion and The Cinema

Blacklist, Hollywood

Cook, Bruce. *The Black Years of Dalton Trumbo*. 1:1 Oct 1975, 30-36. illus. Trumbo's film career while blacklisted. Ref. *The Brave One* (Rapper). Trumbo instrumental in breaking down the blacklist.

Blacks in Films—See: Negroes in Films

Bogdanovich, Peter

McMurtry, Larry. *McMurtry on the Movies*. 1:3 Dec 1975, 4-5, 69; 1:4 Jan-Feb 1976, 8-9, 65; 1:5 March 1976, 6-7, 73. illus. Problems of adapting books to films. Ref. McMurtry's own novel/script *The Last Picture Show*.

Books, Film

McMurtry, Larry. *McMurtry on the Movies*. 1:8 June 1976, 6-7, 79. illus. Annotated list of books that would make good films.

McMurtry, Larry. *McMurtry on the Movies*. 1:10 Sept 1976, 6-7, 80. illus. Published screenplays are neither books, nor movies.

Thompson, Richard. *Focus on Education: The Deadliest Art*. 1:3 Dec 1975, 70-71, 78; 1:4 Jan-Feb 1976, 66-68, pt. 1: Nature, form, authors, types of film textbooks. Includes list of 28 film textbooks, pt. 2: bibliographies, visuals, references, factual errors in film textbooks.

Turan, Kenneth. *The Nostalgia Industry*. 1:4 Jan-Feb 1976, 50-51, 77. Mass-market film books. Ref. Citadel and A. S. Barnes. Letter in reply: 1:9 July-Aug 1976, 3.

See also: Adaptations; Periodicals; Study and Teaching

Brown, David

Dialogue on Film: Richard Zanuck and David Brown. 1:1 Oct 1975, 37-52. illus. Interview. Definition, role of the producer. Ref. their collaborations: *Jaws*, *The Sugarland Express*, *The Sting*.

Canada

Cook, Bruce. *The Canadian Dilemma*. 1:2 Nov 1975, 20-24. illus. French Canadian film industry (ref. Claude Jutra) vs. English Canadian film industry (ref. Don Shebib).

Cannes Film Festival

Turan, Kenneth. *Festival Report: Cannes*. 1:9 July-Aug 1976, 4-5.

Webb, Michael. *Festival Report: Cannes*. 1:9 July-Aug 1976, 5, 68-69. illus.

Cars in Films

Smith, Julian. *Car Culture in the Movies: What Mad Pursuit*. 1:10 Sept 1976, 30-32, 49-53. illus. Car culture in American films. Ref. *Gone with the Wind* (Halicki).

Cartagena Film Festival

Taylor, John Russell. *Festival Report: Cartagena*. 1:8 June 1976, 5, 78.

Censorship

Debevoise, Nancy. *No Violence, No Profanity, No Nudity*. 1:9 July-Aug 1976, 28-32. illus. Movies and TV censorship: how the network hatchets are wielded and why.

See also: Cuts in Films

Chandler, Raymond

MacShane, Frank. *Raymond Chandler and Hollywood*. pt. 1: 1:6 April 1976, 62-69 illus. Ref. *The Blue Dahlia*, *Double Indemnity*, *The Lady in the Lake*, *The Big Sleep*. pt. 2: 1:7 May 1976, 54-60. illus. ref. *Strangers on a Train*, Chandler's writing for the *Atlantic*, and Marlowe on radio.

Chicago International Film Festival

Ebert, Roger. *Festival Report: Chicago*. 1:4 Jan-Feb 1976, 7, 68. illus.

Children and The Cinema

See: Family in Films; Yellow Ball Workshop

Comedy

Kerr, Walter. *Silence: The Unique Experience: Silent Comedy Reconsidered*. 1:1 Oct 1975, 54-59. illus. Short comedies of the '20s. Ref. Lloyd Hamilton and *Move Along*.

Kerr, Walter. *Who Was Harry Langdon?* 1:2 Nov 1975, 6-13. illus. The Langdon character. Langdon's relation to silent comedy and comedians generally.

Wiener, Thomas. *Comment: The Human Comedy*. 1:10 Sept 1976, 2. Characteristic formats of current TV comedy.

Conference on Visual Anthropology

See: Ethnography and The Cinema

Coppola, Francis Ford

McBride, Joseph. *Coppola Inc.* 1:2 Nov 1975, 14-18. illus. Biographical sketch: present film and non-film projects. Ref. *City* magazine.

Critics and Criticism

Alpert, Hollis. *Comment: What? No Movie Reviews?* 1:5 March 1976, 2. Film reviews—do they have a place in scholarly film criticism?

See also: Auteur Theory, Study and Teaching

Curtiz, Michael

See: Casablanca

Cuts in Films

Flamini, Roland. *Endgame: In Search of the Missing Final Fadeout*. 1:6 April 1976, 74-76. illus. Unused endings of well-known films. Films to which more than one ending was filmed.

See also: Censorship; Editors and Editing

Davis, Bette

Drew, Bernard. 1:10 Sept 1976, 22-25. illus. Thoughts on her films. Based on interview on the set of *Burnt Offerings*.

DeMille, Cecil B.

Routt, William D. *The Old Wild Men of the Movies*. 1:10 Sept 1976, 54-59. illus. Naive art: directors whose fine personal work is too idiosyncratic for conventional analysis. Includes DeMille.

Devils in Films—See: Religion and The Cinema

Diamond, I. A. L.

Dialogue on Film: Billy Wilder and I. A. L. Diamond. 1:9

July-Aug 1976, 33-48. illus. Interview. filmogr. Their script/directorial collaborations.

Dickens, Charles

Pointer, Michael. *A Dickens Garland*. 1:3 Dec 1975, 14-19. illus. Survey of film adaptations of Dickens.

Distribution

Coolidge, Martha. *Explorations: I've Made the Film. Now What Do I Do With It?* 1:6 April 1976, 88-90.

Coolidge, Martha. *Explorations: You Mean People Get Paid to do That?* 1:8 June 1976, 68-70. Distribution "deals": how the \$ travels from the box office to the independent filmmaker.

Documentaries

Ward, Alex. *Political Filmmaking: The Selling of the Candidates*. 1:6 April 1976, 56-60. illus. Ref. John Deardourff, Bob Squier, Charles Guggenheim, Glenn Pearcy.

Weis, Elisabeth. *Family Portraits*. 1:2 Nov 1975, 54-59. illus. Includes list of directors and distributors of family portrait films. Characteristics, subjects, makers of bio- and autobiographical family films. Ref. Amalie Rothschild, Joyce Chopra and Claudia Weill, Martin Scorsese, Jonas Mekas, Adolfas Mekas, Jerome Hill, Robert Frank, Dick Rogers, Ken Schneider.

See also: Ethnography and The Cinema

Dwan, Allan

Routt, William D. *The Old Wild Men of the Movies*. 1:10 Sept 1976, 54-59. illus. Naive art: directors whose fine personal work is too idiosyncratic for conventional analysis. Includes Dwan.

Editors and Editing

Dialogue on Film: Verna Fields. 1:8 June 1976, 33-48. illus. Interview. filmogr. Job of the film editor. Fields's career, films she's worked on.

See also: Cuts in Films

Education, Film

See: Books, Film; Study and Teaching

Educational Television—See: Television

Ethnography and The Cinema

Horowitz, Karen. *Explorations: Elephants, Home Movies, Senior Citizens, and Yanomamo Anthropologists Go Bananas*. 1:10 Sept 1976, 66-68. The Conference on Visual Anthropology.

Experimental Cinema

Gunning, Tom. *The Participatory Film*. 1:1 Oct 1975, 81-83. illus. Essential concern of avant-garde filmmakers: relationship between audience and film. Films of analysis rather than films of reverie. Ref. George Landow (*Institutional Quality, Remedial Reading Comprehension*) and Hollis Frampton (*Zorns Lemma, Nostalgia*).

See also: Independent Films

Family in Films

Chemasi, Antonio. *Comment: The Family Connection*. 1:8 June 1976, 2. Family life as depicted on film and TV.

Rosen, Marjorie. *Movies, Mommies, and the American Dream*. 1:4 Jan-Feb 1976, 10-15. illus. Chronology of Motherhood portrayed in movies: Lois Weber's *Where Are My Children* (1916) through early '70s. The '30s' cult of child-worship.

Weis, Elisabeth. *Family Portraits*. 1:2 Nov 1975, 54-59. illus. Includes list of directors and distributors of family portrait films. Characteristics, makers, subjects of bio- and autobiographical family films. Ref. Amalie Rothschild (*Nana, Mom, and Me*), Joyce Chopra and Claudia Weill (*Joyce at 34*), Martin Scorsese (*Italianamerican*), Jonas Mekas (*Reminiscences of A Journey To Lithuania*), Adolfas Mekas (*Going Home*), Jerome Hill (*Film Portrait*), Robert Frank (*Conversations in Vermont*), Dick Rogers (*Elephants*), Ken Schneider (*Chicken Soup*), Martha Coolidge (*David, Off and On, Old-Fashioned Woman, Not a Pretty Picture*), Mirra Bank (*Yudie*).

Fassbinder, Rainer Werner

Robinson, David. *Festival Report: London and Paris*. 1:5 March 1976, 4-5, 71. illus. Ref. Fassbinder at the London: *Fox, Mother Küster's Trip to Heaven*, and *Fear of Fear*.

Fellini, Federico—See: Casanova

Festivals

Webb, Michael. *Festival Report: From Adelaide to Acapulco*. 1:7 May 1976, 4-5. Kinds, characteristics of film festivals—local to international.

See also: Ann Arbor; Cannes; Cartagena; Chicago; Los Angeles; London; Mannheim; Moscow; Paris; Telluride; Viennale

Fields, Verna

Dialogue on Film: Verna Fields. 1:8 June 1976, 33-48. illus. Interview. filmogr. Career, films she's worked on. Job of the film editor generally.

Film

(For all word combinations in which "FILM" is the first word, use the second word, e.g., MUSIC instead of FILM MUSIC.)

FILMEX

See: Los Angeles Film Festival

Fitzgerald, F. Scott

Alpert, Hollis. *Fitzgerald, Hollywood, and The Last Tycoon*. 1:5 March 1976, 8-14. illus. Includes inset "Hollywood Daze" about attempts to portray Fitzgerald on film and TV. Ref. F. Scott Fitzgerald in *Hollywood* (ABC 2-hour special). Letter in reply from S. Scher: 1:7 May 1976, 3. Additional TV adaptations.

Ford, John

Silver, Charles. *The Apprenticeship of John Ford*. 1:7 May 1976, 62-67. illus. Ford's first two decades of filmmaking.

Foreign Films

Gerard, Lillian. *The Ascendancy of Lina Wertmüller*. 1:7

May 1976, 20-27. illus. Chronology of foreign film scene in USA. Until Wertmüller, quality and popularity of foreign films were in decline.

Franklin, Hollis

Gunning, Tom. The Participatory Film. 1:1 Oct 1975, 81-83. illus. Includes *Zorns Lemma* and *Nostalgia*.

Fuller, Samuel

Fuller, Samuel. News That's Fit to Print. 1:1 Oct 1975, 20-24. illus. Relationship between newspaper work and filmmaking. Newspaper films generally. Ref. his own career as newspaperman and filmmaker.

Routt, William D. The Old Wild Men of the Movies. 1:10 Sept 1976, 54-59. illus. Naive art: directors whose fine personal work is too idiosyncratic for conventional analysis. Includes Fuller.

Garbo, Greta

Robinson, David. Festival Report: Berlin. 1:1 Oct 1975, 4-6. illus. Garbo retrospective at the Berlin Festival.

God in Films—See: Religion and The Cinema

Goldman, William

Ward, Alex. Cut: William Goldman. 1:4 Jan-Feb 1976, 28-32. illus. Career, screenwriting techniques.

Grossman, Lawrence

Frank, Phyllis. Just Who Is Lawrence K. Grossman? He's the New President of PBS. 1:8 June 1976, 24-27. illus.

Guggenheim, Charles

Ward, Alex. Political Filmmaking: The Selling of the Candidates. 1:6 April 1976, 56-60. illus. Ref. Guggenheim.

Halicki, H. B. (Toby)

Smith, Julian. Car Culture in the Movies: What Mad Pursuit. 1:10 Sept 1976, 30-32, 49-53. illus. Car culture in American films. Ref. *Gone in Sixty Seconds*. Includes Halicki interview material.

Hamilton, Lloyd

Kerr, Walter. Silence: The Unique Experience: Silent Comedy Reconsidered. 1:1 Oct 1975, 54-59. illus. Short comedies of the '20s. Ref. Hamilton and *Move Along*.

Heisler, Stuart

Routt, William D. The Old Wild Men of the Movies. 1:10 Sept 1976, 54-59. illus. Naive art: Directors whose fine personal work is too idiosyncratic for conventional analysis. Includes Heisler.

Historical Films

Wood, Michael. Parade's End: The Past in Movies. 1:5 March 1976, 22-26. illus. Recent (turn of the century) past in American movies. Ref. *The Magnificent Ambersons* (Welles) and *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Minnelli).

See also: Realism

Hitchcock, Alfred

Lambert, Gavin. Hitchcock and the Art of Suspense. 1:4 Jan-Feb 1976, 16-23; 1:5 March 1976, 60-67. illus. pt. 1: *The Pleasure Garden*, *The Lodger*, *Murder*, *Blackmail*, *The 39 Steps*, *Sabotage*, *The Lady Vanishes*, *Rebecca*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, *Notorious*. pt. 2: *Vertigo*, *Rear Window*, *North by Northwest*, *Psycho*, *The Birds*, *The Wrong Man*, *Strangers on a Train*.

MacShane, Frank. Raymond Chandler and Hollywood. 1:7 May 1976, 54-60. illus. Ref. his script work on *Strangers on a Train*.

Hochbaum, Werner Paul Adolf

Robinson, David. Festival Report: Vienna. 1:10 Sept 1976, 4-5, 69. illus. Ref. the Hochbaum retrospective.

Hollywood

Baxter, John. The Continental Touch. 1:10 Sept 1976, 17-21. illus. Hollywood's European exile movie colony in the '20s and '30s.

Swindell, Larry. 1939: A Very Good Year. 1:3 Dec 1975, 24-31. illus. Hollywood films of 1939 as best argument for the studio system.

See Also: Stars and The Star System; USA

Hollywood in Film and Literature

McBride, Joseph. The Glory That Was Hollywood. 1:3 Dec 1975, 52-56. illus. Films about Hollywood: past, present, future.

Schulberg, Budd. The Hollywood Novel: The Love-Hate Relationship between Writers and Hollywood. 1:7 May 1976, 28-32. illus.

Hollywood Ten See: Blacklist. Hollywood.

Holmes, Sherlock

Pointer, Michael. Holmes Lives and So Does his Smarter Brother. 1:2 Nov 1975, 66-70. illus. Holmes portrayed on film—silent era through *Sherlock Holmes*: *Smarter Brother* (Wilder).

Independent Films

Coolidge, Martha. Explorations: I've Made the Film. Now What Do I Do With It? 1:6 April 1976, 88-90.

Coolidge, Martha. Explorations: You Mean People Get Paid to do That? 1:8 June 1976, 68-70. Distribution "deals": how the \$ travels from box office to independent filmmaker.

See Also: Experimental Cinema

Japan

Anderson, J. L. Ken, the Noodle Vendor. 1:8 June 1976, 28-32. illus. Japanese television programming.

Journalism and The Cinema

Aldridge, Larry and John W. English. Focus on Education: Television's Yesterday—Preserved. 1:10 Sept 1976, 70-71, 75. The Peabody Awards and collection of entries for best broadcasts and broadcasters on radio and TV since the '40s.

Fuller, Samuel. News that's Fit to Print. 1:1 Oct 1975, 20-24. illus. Relationship between newspaper work and filmmaking. Newspaper films generally. Ref. Fuller's own career as newspaperman and filmmaker.

Hills, Philip. The Theater of News. 1:5 March 1976, 16-21; 1:6 April 1976, 70-73. illus. Television's coverage of the news.

Rossell, Deac. Hollywood and the Newsroom. 1:1 Oct 1975, 14-18. illus. Chronology of films with newspaper room/reporter subjects. Women in newspaper films. Letter in reply: 1:4 Jan-Feb 1976, 4.

See Also: Politics and The Cinema

Jutra, Claude

Cook, Bruce. The Canadian Dilemma. 1:2 Nov 1975, 20-24. illus. French Canadian film industry (ref. Jutra) vs. English Canadian film industry (ref. Don Shebib).

Kazan, Elia

Dialogue on Film: Elia Kazan. 1:5 March 1976, 33-48. illus. Interview, filmogr. Career, thoughts on stage vs. screen, actors, director's job, producer's job. Ref. his own films.

See also: Last Tycoon, The

Landow, George

Gunning, Tom. The Participatory Film. 1:1 Oct 1975, 81-83. illus. Includes *Institutional Quality and Remedial Reading Comprehension*.

Langdon, Harry

Kerr, Walter. Who Was Harry Langdon? 1:2 Nov 1975, 6-13. illus. The Langdon character. Langdon's relation to silent comedy and comedians.

Lee, Bruce

Turan, Kenneth. The Apotheosis of Bruce Lee. 1:1 Oct 1975, 66-70. illus. Biographical in memoriam.

Lester, Richard

See: Hard Day's Night, A

Levinson, Dick

Cook, Bruce. Levinson and Link: Television's Incredible Hyphenates. 1:4 Jan-Feb 1976, 56-59. illus. Dick Levinson and Bill Link—their scriptwriting careers/collaborations.

Link, Bill See: Levinson, Dick

London Film Festival

Robinson, David. Festival Report: London and Paris. 1:5 March 1976, 4-5, 71. illus.

Los Angeles International Film Exposition (FILMEX)

Knight, Arthur. Festival Report: Los Angeles. 1:8 June 1976, 4-5. Letter from Filmex director Gary Essert in reply: 1:10 Sept 1976, 3.

McMurtry, Larry

Regular column appearing in each issue of *American Film*, written by McMurtry in which he discusses the ins/outs, art/craft of scriptwriting with reference to his own career.

Mannheim International Film Festival

Greenberg, Alan. Festival Report: Mannheim. 1:4 Jan-Feb 1976, 6. illus.

Minnelli, Vincente

Wood, Michael. Parade's End: The Past in Movies. 1:5 March 1976, 22-26. illus. The recent (turn of the century) past in American movies. Ref. *Meet Me in St. Louis* and *The Magnificent Ambersons* (Welles).

Moreau, Jeanne

Dialogue on Film: François Truffaut and Jeanne Moreau. 1:7 May 1976, 33-48. illus. Interview, filmogr. Careers, acting and directorial techniques. Includes *Lumière*.

Moscow International Film Festival

Hitchens, Gordon. Moscow: Detente! Humanism! Fraternity! 1:2 Nov 1975, 2-3. illus.

Mothers in Films See: Family in Films

Museum of Modern Art Film Study Center

See: Study and Teaching

Musical

Sharples, Win. Explorations: Love's Labours Found. 1:5 March 1976, 68-70. Formation, purposes, achievements, publications of the Miklos Rozsa Soc. and the Elmer Bernstein Film Music Collection. Letter from John Fitzpatrick in reply: 1:7 May 1976, 3. Gives additional Rozsa Soc. information. Letter in reply: 1:8 June 1976, 3. Gives information on other film music preservation. Ref. Max Steiner Music Soc.

Wiener, Thomas. The Rise and Fall of the Rock Film. 1:2 Nov 1975, 25-29. illus. Characteristics of rock movies—mid-'50s through *A Hard Day's Night* (1964); pt. 2, 1:3 Dec 1975, 58-63. illus. Mid-'60s' films, festival films, '70s' nostalgia films, *Tommy* (Russell), *Stardust* (Apted).

Negroes in Films

Baldwin, James. Growing Up with the Movies. 1:7 May 1976, 8-18. illus. Baldwin's Harlem boyhood when the white world on the screen curiously reflected the world he lived in.

Newspaper Films and Newsreels

See: Journalism and The Cinema; Politics and The Cinema.

PBS—See: Television

Paik, Nam June

Greenberg, Alan. Explorations: Let's Make It Red and Love It. 1:2 Nov 1975, 50-53. illus. Development of video: Nam June Paik as pioneer and practitioner.

Pakula, Alan J.

See: All The President's Men

Paris Film Festival

Robinson, David. Festival Report: London and Paris. 1:5 March 1976, 4-5, 71. illus.

Pasolini, Pier Paolo

See: Salò, or The 120 Days of Sodom

Past in Films

See: Historical Films; Realism

Peabody Awards And Collection

Aldridge, Larry and John W. English. Focus on Education:

Television's Yesterday—Preserved. 1:10 Sept 1976, 70-71, 75.

Penn, Arthur—See: Bonnie and Clyde

Periodicals

Regular column, appearing in each issue of *American Film*, which abstracts selected current articles from other journals.

Photography and The Cinema

Taylor, John Russell. The Image Makers. 1:9 July-Aug 1976, 22-27. illus. Image-creating portraits of stars taken by studio photographers for mass distribution.

Potter, Sidney

Dialogue on Film: Sidney Potter. 1:10 Sept 1976, 33-48. illus. Interview, filmogr. Career: acting, directing, being black, his films.

Polanski, Roman—See: Chinatown

Politics And The Cinema

Ward, Alex. Political Filmmaking: The Selling of the Candidates. 1:6 April 1976, 56-60. illus. Ref. Charles Guggenheim, John Dearthourff, Bob Squier, Glenn Pearcy.

See also: Journalism and The Cinema

Porter, Edwin S.

McBride, Joseph. *The Great Train Robbery: A Critical Symposium*. 1:4 Jan-Feb 1976, 52-55, 78. illus. Parody: today's critics' would-have-been 1903 comments on *The Great Train Robbery*.

Presidents of USA, Favorite Films of

Flamini, Roland. The Presidents and Their Movies. 1:10 Sept 1976, 26-29.

Producers

Dialogue on Film: Richard Zanuck and David Brown. 1:1 Oct 1975, 37-52. illus. Definition, role of the producer. Ref. Zanuck/Brown collaborations: *Jaws*, *The Sugarland Express*, *The Sting*.

Public Television

See: Television

Rapper, Irving

See: Brave One, The

Ray, Nicholas

See: You Can't Go Home

Realism

Sklar, Robert. Windows on a Made-Up World: American Movies and the Cultural Past. 1:9 July-Aug 1976, 60-64. illus. Old movies reveal principally the industry that produced them rather than the culture. Movies don't merely reflect life; they're bigger than life. Ref. the Golden Age of Hollywood—from the introduction of sound to the advent of TV.

See Also: Historical Films

Religion and The Cinema

COMING in American Film

John Kenneth Galbraith as TV star—in an important new PBS series this spring. "The Age of Uncertainty."

Michael Wood on the re-emergence of science-fiction films—with a new look.

The state of film criticism—past and present. An examination by the eminent critic Richard Gilman.

The United States Government as filmmaker—an investigative report.

What the old March of Time newsreels tell us about ourselves today.

A visit with the surviving original animators of Walt Disney. They've reunited to make a film.

A look at sophisticated comedy in film—from the perspective of the sophisticated seventies.

Stephen Zito on what TV news was in the Murrow era and what it's become.

Pointer, Michael. Good Gods and Bad. 1:10 Sept 1976, 60-64; illus. Chronology of cinematic attitudes toward religion: God, Christ, manifestations of the devil, etc.

Ritchie, Michael

See: **Bad News Bears**

Rozsa, Miklos

See: **Music**

Science Fiction

Bova, Ben. *Space*. 1999. 1:4 Jan-Feb 1976, 24-27. illus. Trends, special effects in science fiction films—silent era through TV series *Space*: 1999.

See also: **Special Effects**

Scriptwriters And Scriptwriting (includes Scripts)

McMurtry, Larry. *McMurtry on the Movies*. Regular series appearing in each issue of *American Film*. Scriptwriting: art or craft?; ins/outs, adapting novels for films, etc. Ref. McMurtry's own career.

See also: **Adaptations; Books, Film**

Shelby, Don

Cook, Bruce. The Canadian Dilemma. 1:2 Nov 1975, 20-24. illus. French Canadian film industry (ref. Claude Jutra) vs. English Canadian film industry (ref. Shelby).

Silent Comedy

See: **Comedy**

Silver, Joan Micklin

See: **Hester Street**

Special Effects

Bova, Ben. *Space*. 1999. 1:4 Jan-Feb 1976, 24-27. illus. Trends, special effects in science fiction films—silent era through *Space*: 1999.

Martin, James M. The Best of All Impossible Worlds: Little-known and Unsung, the Special Effects Craftsmen Destroy and Re-create the World. 1:5 March 1976, 28-32, 49. illus. Matte painting, optical printers, rear projection, reflex front projection, miniature work, slit-scan, ECP/IMS. Letter in reply: 1:8 June 1976, 3.

Spielberg, Steven

See: **Jaws; Sugarland Express, The**

Stars and The Star System

Baxter, John. Hail to the Chief. 1:9 July-Aug 1976, 50-52, 54. illus. Elegant travel modes for the stars of the '20s and '30s: the LA-Chicago runs of the Chief and the Super Chief; the NY-Chicago run of the 20th Century Ltd.

Baxter, John. The Continental Touch. 1:10 Sept 1976, 17-21. illus. Hollywood's European exile colony of the '20s and '30s.

Cook, Bruce. Why TV Stars Don't Become Movie Stars (and on the other hand, some movie stars don't do too well on television). 1:8 June 1976, 58-61. illus. Letter in reply from Gary Shaffer: 1:10 Sept 1976, 3.

Flamini, Roland. Star Tracks. 1:9 July-Aug 1976, 53. "Stars Over America": the stars' 1942 war bond drive

Taylor, John Russell. The Image Makers. 1:9 July-Aug 1976, 22-27. illus. Image-creating portraits of stars taken by studio photographers for mass distribution.

Stewart, James

McBride, Joseph. Aren't You... Jimmy Stewart? 1:8 June 1976, 51, 54-56. illus. Career, personality, screen image.

Study and Teaching

Grogg, Sam L. Jr. Film Education vs Film Career. 1:4 Jan-Feb 1976, 3. Response to IATSE's comments on AFI's *Guide to College Courses in Film and Television*.

Grogg, Sam L. Jr. Focus on Education: Snap Course? 1:6 April 1976, 84. What's in an Intro to Film class?

Grogg, Sam L. Jr. Focus on Education: A Summer Schooling. 1:8 June 1976, 76. Summer seminars, symposia, workshops in the motion picture arts.

Grogg, Sam L. Jr. Focus on Education: UFA Turns 30. 1:2 Nov 1975, 65, 71. Origins, programs, membership of the University Film Assoc.

Grogg, Sam L. Jr. Where do Film Teachers Come From? 1:1 Oct 1975, 2-3. Ref. the 1975 CUNY Conference ("Film and the University").

McGilligan, Patrick. Focus on Education: The Madison Mecca. 1:5 March 1976, 72-80. Organization, goals, holdings, etc. of the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research.

McGilligan, Patrick. Volleyball, Square Dancing and Cinema: New England's Multi-Purpose Film Study Center. 1:1 Oct 1975, 27-29. illus. History, purposes, projects of the University Film Study Center, Cambridge, Mass.

Silver, Charles. Focus on Education: Using MOMA. 1:7 May 1976, 72-73.

Thomson, David. Focus on Education: The Obsessive Art. 1:9 July-Aug 1976, 75-77. illus. Pros, cons of using the auteur theory as the core of a film course.

See also: **Books, Film; Critics and Criticism**

Teaching About Film

See: **Study And Teaching**

Television

Aldridge, Larry and John W. English. Focus on Education: Television's Yesterday—Preserved. 1:10 Sept 1976, 70-71, 75. The Peabody Collection of and awards for radio and TV broadcasting since the '40s.

Alpert, Hollis. Comment: The Book Tube. 1:9 July-Aug 1976, 2, 79. Selling books via the TV talk show.

Alpert, Hollis. Comment: Choice or Overkill? 1:7 May 1976, 2. How much TV fare is worth watching? preserving? watching again?

Anderson, J. L. Ken, the Noodle Vendor. 1:8 June 1976, 28-32. illus. Japanese TV programming.

Carroll, Robert. Explorations: Satellite Entertainment. 1:3 Dec 1975, 64-66. illus. Satellites, earth centers, and pay TV.

Champlin, Charles. TV: The End of the Beginning. 1:1 Oct 1975, 60-65. illus. Changing characteristics of TV programming—late '40s through mid '70s. Impact, importance of cable. Transference between TV and motion picture industries.

Chemasi, Antonio. Comment: The Family Connection. 1:8 June 1976, 2. Family life as depicted on film and TV.

Cook, Bruce. Explorations: Lincoln Center and the Real Thing. 1:7 May 1976, 68-71. illus. Live "event" broadcasts in the arts. Ref. *Live From Lincoln Center*.

Cook, Bruce. Why TV Stars Don't Become Movie Stars (and on the other hand, some movie stars don't do too well on television). 1:8 June 1976, 58-61. illus. Letter in reply from Gary Shaffer, director of TV Casting, MGM-TV: 1:10 Sept 1976, 3.

Debevoise, Nancy. No Violence, No Profanity, No Nudity. 1:9 July-Aug 1976, 28-32. illus. Movies and TV censorship: how the network hatchets are wielded and why.

Flamini, Roland. Television and the Magoo Factor. 1:7 May 1976, 50-53. illus. Testing TV shows before putting them on the air: Ref. Audience Studies Inc. and the Preview House.

Frank, Phyllis. Just Who Is Lawrence K. Grossman? He's the New President of PBS. 1:8 June 1976, 24-27. illus. PBS: problems, programming, localism vs federalism, ideal fare. Includes a PBS chronicle—1953 to the present.

Hills, Philip. The Theater of News. 1:5 March 1976, 16-21: 1:6 April 1976, 70-73. illus. TV's coverage of the news.

Wiener, Thomas. Comment: The Human Comedy. 1:10 Sept 1976, 2. Formats, characteristics of current TV comedy.

Wood, Peter H. Television as Dream. 1:3 Dec 1975, 20-23. illus. TV and the collective dream-life of the society: psychoanalysis of the medium.

See also: **Video**

Telluride Film Festival

Webb, Michael. Festival Report: Telluride. 1:3 Dec 1975, 2-3. illus.

Towne, Robert

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Trains

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